

FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION



MAY 1982
Volume 4
No. 5

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EASTERN ASSOCIATED COAL
CORPORATION

v.

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

Docket No. PITT 76X203

IBMA 77-28

DECISION

This case arose under the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et seq. (1976) (amended 1977) ("the Coal Act"). 1/ Apart from the merits of this case, a procedural issue first he addressed. The Commission requested supplemental memoranda and held oral argument on the question of whether under the Coal Act an operator could obtain review of a notice of violation independent of a civil penalty proceeding or a proceeding to review the validity of a withdrawal order. Attention was focused on this issue due to the decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in UMWA v. Andrus (Carbon Fuel Co.), 581 F.2d 888 (1978), denied sub nom. Carbon Fuel Co. v. Andrus, 439 U.S. 928 (1978). In Carbon Fuel the court, in essence, held that under the Coal Act no notice of violation not involving an imminent danger could not be reviewed on the merits prior to the issuance of a withdrawal order or institution of civil penalty proceedings.

In Howard Mullins v. Andrus, 664 F.2d 297 (D.C. Cir. 1980), the D.C. Circuit again was confronted with a Coal Act case involving review of a notice of violation. Mullins was pending when the decision in Carbon Fuel was issued and the court refused to retroactively apply Carbon Fuel holding. Balancing the factors relevant to retroactive application of a newly announced principle, the court concluded that retroactive application of its Carbon Fuel holding was not warranted. 664 F.2d at 302-305. Therefore, in Mullins the court proceeded to review the merits of the notice of violation therein at issue.

For reasons similar to those of the D.C. Circuit in refusing to retroactively apply its Carbon Fuel holding, we believe that it is unnecessary at this late date for us to resolve whether, in our view, Carbon Fuel or precedent established by other courts and the Board of Mine Operations Appeals correctly resolved the issue of review-

1/ On March 8, 1978, this case was pending on appeal before the Department of Interior's Board of Mine Operations Appeals. Accordingly it is before the Commission for disposition. 30 U.S.C. § 961 (Supp. 1979). The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has been substituted for its predecessor agency, the Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration (MESA).

impact that reviewing the merits of the three cases on miner safety and health, we will proceed to review the merits at this time.

This case involves the interpretation of 30 C.F.R. § 77.215(j). The standard provides in pertinent part:

All fires in refuse piles shall be extinguished, and the method used shall be in accordance with a plan approved by the District Manager.

On June 22, 1976, an inspector of the Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration ("MESA") inspected a burning refuse pile located on the surface of an underground bituminous coal mine owned and operated by Eastern Associated Coal Corporation ("Eastern"). The pile is composed of refuse deposited by the previous owner of the mine, Delmont Fuel Company. At the time of the inspection in this case, the pile was not being used as a depository for mine refuse and had not been so used since 1953. The refuse pile is located 2 miles from the Eastern mine's main portal and 800 to 1,000 feet from Eastern's preparation plant. The refuse pile is 1,800 feet long and 400 feet wide. To the west of the refuse pile is a railroad track running to the the mine's preparation plant. To the east are two roads - one on mine property, the other on township property.

The inspector was advised before he left his office that a plan to extinguish the fire had not been submitted to the MESA district manager for approval. When the inspector arrived at the mine, he saw smoke rising from the pile at several points and smelled a strong sulphurous odor. Trash was observed at the base of the pile. Motorcycle tire tracks were observed on the pile. 4/ Red dog had been removed from the pile. 5/ After viewing the pile the inspector issued a notice alleging a violation of § 77.215(j). The notice stated:

2/ Lucas Coal Co. v. IBMOA, 522 F.2d 581, 587 (3d Cir. 1975); Lucas v. Morton, 358 F. Supp. 900, 903-904 (W.D. Pa. 1973 (3 - judge court)); Reliable Coal Corp., 1 IBMA 50 (1971); Freeman Coal Mining Co., 1 IBMA (1970). But see United States v. Fowler, 646 F.2d 859 (4th Cir. 1981) (agreeing with rationale of Carbon Fuel).

3/ Inland Steel Coal Co., VINC 77-164, IBMA 77-66 (unabated notice); Florence Mining Co. et al., PITT 57-15, etc, IBMA 77-66 (unabated notice); Alabama By-Products Corp., BARB 76-153, IBMA 76-114 (abated notice).

4/ It cannot be determined from the record who was responsible for the trash or the tracks. Eastern's miners, however, are instructed never to go onto the pile and no evidence was introduced that any ever did. Moreover Eastern conducts no work on or at the pile.

5/ Red dog. Material of a reddish color resulting from the combustion of shale and other mine waste in dumps on the surface. U.S. Department of the Interior, Dictionary of Mining, Mineral and Related Terms 904 (1968). Red dog is commonly used for road repair. Although Eastern had in the past allowed the township to remove red dog from the pile, this permission had been revoked one-half year before the inspection.

Eastern claimed that the notice was invalidly issued because the cited standard does not apply to the subject refuse pile. The administrative law judge agreed. The judge held that, when a burning refuse pile is part of an underground mine, in order to prove a violation of the standard the Secretary must show: the pile is on mine property; the pile is located in a surface work area of the underground mine 6/; and the pile presents a real or potential hazard to a miner in the normal course of his employment. The judge held that the Secretary had proved the first element, but not the latter two.

The judge's conclusion that the regulation only applied to refuse piles located in "surface work areas where miners would reasonably be expected to work or travel in the normal course of their employment" was based upon his interpretation of section 101(i) of the Coal Act. He found that section 101(i) "authorizes the Secretary to promulgate mandatory safety standards for surface coal mines and for surface work areas of underground coal mines." 7/ (Emphasis added by judge). He concluded, "the Act by its very terms limits the Secretary's authority to regulate surface areas of underground mines and that limitation is specifically directed to a work area...." (Emphasis added by judge). 8/ The judge cited to the title of 30 C.F.R. Part 77 and to 30 C.F.R. § 77.1 as evidence that the Secretary recognized such a limitation. Part 77 is entitled: "Mandatory safety standards, surface coal mines and surface work areas of underground coal mines." (Emphasis added). 30 C.F.R. § 77.1, the scope provision for Part 77, states:

6/ The judge defined "surface work area" as:
Any surface area of a coal mine which could present a hazard to the health and safety of miners in places where they could reasonably be expected to work or travel in the normal course and scope of their employment.

7/ Section 101(i), 30 U.S.C. § 811(i) (1976), stated:
Proposed mandatory health and safety standards for surface coal mines shall be published by the Secretary, in accordance with the provisions of this section, not later than twelve months after the date of enactment of this Act. Proposed mandatory health and safety standards for surface work areas of underground coal mines in addition to those established for such areas under this Act, shall be published by the Secretary, in accordance with the provisions of this section, not later than twelve months after the date of enactment of this Act.

8/ The judge noted the following statements appearing in the preamble when the refuse pile regulations were adopted:

The final regulations will provide the operator with flexibility in constructing refuse piles and impounding structures which will present no hazard to coal miners in their work.

(Emphasis added).

We find that the judge erred in concluding that a burning refuse pile must be located in a surface work area of an underground coal mine to be subject to the standard and that the Secretary must prove a burning refuse pile presents a real or potential hazard to a miner if the normal cause of his employment.

Section 101(a) of the Coal Act, 30 U.S.C. § 811(a)(1976), grants the Secretary the authority to promulgate mandatory standards. That section stated:

The Secretary shall, in accordance with the procedures set forth in this section, develop, promulgate, and revise ... improved mandatory safety standards for the protection of life and the prevention of injuries in a coal mine....

(Emphasis added). Section 3(h) of the Coal Act, 30 U.S.C. § 802(h) defined "coal mine" as:

[A]n area of land and all structures, facilities, machinery, tools, equipment, shafts, slopes, tunnels, excavations and other property, real or personal, placed upon, under, or above the surface of such land by any person, used in, or to be used in, or resulting from, the work of extracting in such area bituminous coal....

This definition is broad enough to include refuse piles, and it does not indicate that the term was meant to be limited by whether work or traffic transpired at or near the enumerated areas or structures. Section 77.215(j) was promulgated in the Federal Register "under the authority of section 101(a) of the 1969 Act." 40 Fed. Reg. 11775 (1975). We conclude that section 101(a)'s mandate to promulgate safety standards for the protection of life and the prevention of injuries in a "coal mine," as that term is defined in section 3(h), brings refuse piles on surface areas of underground mines under the Secretary's jurisdiction.

(footnote 8 cont'd.)

.... A further addition is the requirement in 77.215(j) and 77.216(e) that the fire extinguishing operations on refuse piles and impounding structures be conducted in accordance with an approved plan. This new requirement is justified by the hazardous nature of the fire extinguishing operation and the necessity to ensure that mine personnel involved in extinguishing operations are fully acquainted with the proper use of the equipment to be used. (Emphasis added by judge). 40 Fed. Reg. 775-76

this section was to ensure that the Secretary acted promptly in proposing mandatory standards for surface mines and surface work areas of underground mines. Quick action by the Secretary was needed because the Coal Act itself contained no statutory standards pertaining to surface coal mines and very few statutory standards specifically relating to surface areas of underground mines. An analysis of the bills from which section 101(i) ultimately emerged indicates that although the term "surface work areas" appeared in Senate bill S. 2917, in section 219(c), the purpose of that section was to "require that proposed mandatory safety standards be developed and published ... as soon as possible, but not later than twelve months after enactment." U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Legislative History of the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, 94th Cong., 1st sess., at 213. The House bill H.R. 13950, had a similar provision for the rapid publication of proposed mandatory standards, but its provisions were restricted to surface coal mines. Section 101(h) of the House bill stated:

Proposed mandatory safety standards for surface coal mines shall be developed and published by the Secretary not later than twelve months after the enactment of this Act.

At conference the Senate provision was essentially adopted because it included a requirement that standards be published for surface work areas of underground mines as well as for surface coal mines. Legis. Hist. at 1509. Although neither the Senate Committee report nor the Conference Report explains why the term "surface work area" was used rather than "surface area," we believe it to have been a case of imprecise draftsmanship, rather than an attempt to restrict regulatory jurisdiction to "surface work areas". As we have noted, the broad grant of authority in the Act afforded the Secretary jurisdiction to regulate "an area of land and all ... property, real or personal ... upon, under or above the surface ... used in ... to be used in, or resulting from, the work of extracting in such area bituminous coal". Restricting the Secretary's authority to only those portions of the surface areas where work or travel occurred, or could be expected to occur, would be inconsistent with the otherwise broad applicability of the Act.

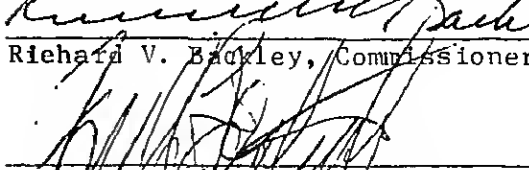
Moreover, there are logical limits to literalism, one of which is when it leads to an incongruous result plainly at variance with the policy of a statute when viewed as a whole. United States v. American Trucking Associates, 310 U.S. 534, 543-544, (1940). The judge's finding that section 101(i) limits the Secretary's authority in regulating surface portions of underground mines to work areas leads to such a result. Under it, although a burning refuse pile in a non-work area of an underground mine would not be subject to § 77.215(j), an identical refuse pile in a non-work area of a surface mine would be, there being no "work area" language pertaining to surface mine standards. Thus, we conclude that the Coal Act, specifically section 101(i), did not restrict the Secretary to regulating only surface work areas of underground mines.

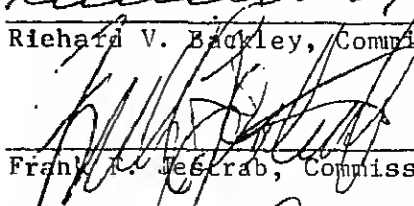
101(i). Indeed, 30 C.F.R. § 77.11 concludes that standards are set forth "pursuant to section 101(i)." In view of the conclusion that the words "surface work areas of underground coal mines" are not used in a jurisdictional sense in section 101(i), we conclude that they do not acquire that sense by their repetition in the standards adopted by the Secretary. 9/

We also disagree with the judge's holding that the Secretary must establish "that the pile presents a hazard, real or potential, which can reasonably be expected to expose a miner to danger in the normal course of his employment." During the promulgation of the refuse piles standards the Secretary published in the Federal Register findings of fact based upon public hearings. 39 Fed. Reg. 38,661. His general finding with respect to refuse piles was that "[c]oal piles ... can present a hazard to health and safety." His specific finding with respect to burning refuse piles was that "[b]urning refuse piles present a health and safety hazard, and that hazard will be decreased or eliminated when the burning pile is extinguished by safe and effective means." Id. Thus, the standard's requirement that burning refuse piles be extinguished in accordance with an approved plan is premised upon the finding that such piles are hazardous. That finding having been made, the Secretary need not prove anew the hazardousness of burning refuse piles in every enforcement proceeding. 10/ To establish a violation of § 77.215(j), as with most standards, non-compliance with the standard's terms need only be shown, i.e., the refuse pile is burning and a plan has not been filed. Cf. Vecco Construction Co. 1977-78 CCH OSHD ¶22,247 (OSHR).

9/ Because we reverse the judge's finding that in order to establish a violation of § 77.215(j) the Secretary must establish that the refuse pile is located in a surface work area, we need not determine whether, as the Secretary argues, the judge adopted too restrictive a definition of the term "surface work area."

10/ Evidence as to the actual extent of the hazard presented by a particular burning refuse pile is, of course, relevant in determining the gravity of a violation for penalty purposes.


Richard V. Backley, Commissioner


Frank C. Jestrab, Commissioner


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

11/ Chairman Collyer assumed office after this case had been considered at a Commission decisional meeting and took no part in the decision. new Commissioner possesses legal authority to participate in pending cases, but such participation is discretionary and is not required for the Commission to take official action. The other Commissioners reach agreement on the disposition of the case prior to Chairman Collyer's assumption of office, and participation by Chairman Collyer would therefore not affect the outcome. In the interest of efficient decision-making, Chairman Collyer elects not to participate in this case.

Former Commissioner Nease participated in considering this case and also voted to reverse the judge's decision, but resigned from the Commission before the decision was ready for signature.

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May 3, 1982

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

v.

DELMONT RESOURCES, INC.

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Docket No. PENN 80-268-R

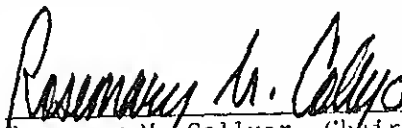
ORDER

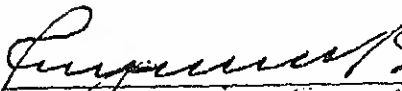
In Secretary of Labor v. Cement Division, National Gypsum Company, 3 FMSHRC 821 (1981), the Commission established the test under section 104(d) of the 1977 Mine Act for determining whether a condition created by a particular violation is of such nature "as could significantly and substantially contribute to the cause and effect of a ... mine ... hazard." In the instant proceeding, a section 104(d)(1) citation was issued. On April 24, 1981, the administrative law judge issued a decision in which he applied the test enunciated in National Gypsum and determined that the "evidence [was] insufficient to sustain the allegation that the ... violation ... was of such nature as could significantly and substantially contribute to the cause and effect of a mine ... hazard." Regarding the "significant and substantial" question, the parties tried the case and submitted their post-hearing briefs prior to the issuance of National Gypsum. On review, the primary question before us is whether the judge correctly determined that the violation was not significant and substantial.

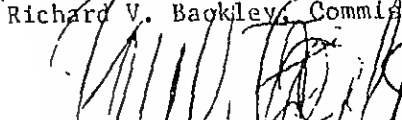
In his brief on review, the Secretary requested that the proceeding be remanded to the judge for the presentation of additional evidence. We determined that the record was insufficient under National Gypsum to sustain the section 104(d)(1) citation. On February 25, 1982, we ordered the Secretary to submit an explanation of the additional evidence that could be presented at this time to meet the National Gypsum test. On March 15, 1982, the Secretary filed a supplemental brief describing evidence he could present if the case were remanded. Neither Delmont nor the UMWA has opposed the Secretary's request for remand.

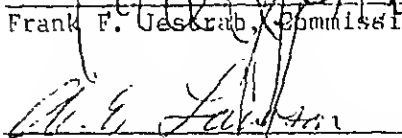
record, we conclude that remand is appropriate to give the pa
opportunity to present evidence relevant to the National Gyps
We express no views as to the probative value and weight of t
described by the Secretary.

Accordingly, this case is remanded to the Chief Administ
Judge for reassignment and further proceedings, on an expedit
consistent with this order. 2/


Rosemary M. Collyer, Chair


Richard V. Backley, Commis


Frank F. Jeschke, Commissi


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

- 1/ Section 113(d)(2)(iii)(C) of the 1977 Mine Act provides
... If the Commission determines that further evidence
necessary on an issue of fact it shall remand the case for
further proceedings before the administrative law judge
2/ The administrative law judge who rendered the initial decision
this matter has since left the Commission.

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May 4, 1982

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

v.

CAPITOL AGGREGATES, INC.

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: Docket No. CENT 79-
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DECISION

This proceeding arises under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et seq., (Supp. III 1979). The on review is whether a ramp used at a facility of Capitol Aggregates is an elevated roadway within the meaning of 30 C.F.R. § 56.1. The cited standard provides that "berms or guards shall be placed on the outer bank of elevated roadways." The administrative law judge found the ramp was an elevated roadway and that the standard was violated. For the reasons that follow, we affirm.

The citation at issue states:

The elevated ramp leading to the solid fuel loading facility was not equipped with a berm or guard creating a hazard to the operator on the front-end loader in case of running down the ramp.

The parties stipulated that the ramp in question was approximately thirty feet long and four feet high at the highest point, and was used by a caterpillar front-end loader for dumping petroleum into a solid fuel loading hopper.

In finding that the ramp was an elevated roadway the judge referred to dictionary definitions of "ramp," "road," and "roadway,"

- 1/ Capitol does not challenge the fact that the ramp was "roadway" rather it asserts the ramp is not a "roadway" subject to the standard.
- 2/ The judge's decision is reported at 3 FMSHRC 1684 (1981).
- 3/ The judge cited definitions in Webster's Third New International Dictionary: "roadways:" A strip of land through which a road is constructed and which is physically altered; "road:" An open way for passage for vehicles, persons and animals ... a private way. The judge also cited the definition of "ramp" in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1979): A sloping way: as a sloping low walk or roadway leading from one level to another. 3 FMSHRC at 1688 (emphasis added).

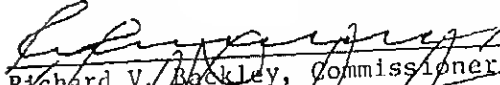
Capitol violated section 56.9-22 by failing to provide berms on the ramp.

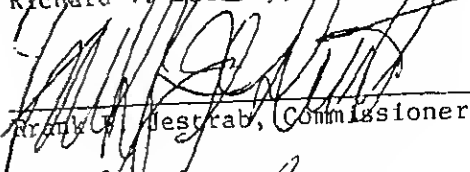
We affirm the judge's conclusion that the ramp at issue is an elevated roadway within the meaning of the cited standard. Contrary to Capitol's assertion, this conclusion does not require an impermissible stretching of the standard. Rather, as indicated by the dictionary definitions relied upon by the judge, the conclusion that some ramps are elevated roadways is rooted in common usage. Furthermore, in light of the nature of the use of the ramp at issue and the purpose of the cited standard, the conclusion flows from a common sense application of the standard to the facts of record. Cf. Burgess Mining and Construction Corp., 3 FMSHRC 296 (February 1981)(bridge is an elevated roadway); El Paso Rock Quarries, Inc., 3 FMSHRC 35 (January 1981)(bench is an elevated roadway). We also hold that the judge properly relied on our decision in Cleveland Cliffs Iron Co. in rejecting the argument that 30 C.F.R. § 56.9-22 applies only to elevated roadways with one outer bank.

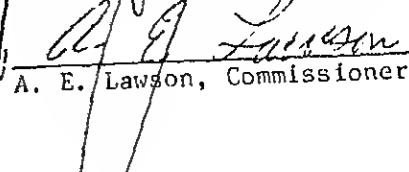
Finally, we reject Capitol's argument that the presence of 30 C.F.R. § 56.9-63 precludes application of the cited standard. Section 56.9-63 provides:

Ramps and dumps should be of solid construction, of ample width, have ample side clearance and headroom, and be kept reasonably free of spillage.

"Elevated roadways" is a general descriptive term that encompasses a variety of more specific applications. See Burgess, supra; El Paso, supra. Although 30 C.F.R. § 56.9-63 further addresses certain safety requirements for a particular type of elevated roadway, it does not purport to exclusively set forth all safety requirements pertaining to ramps. In particular, it does not address the obvious hazard of travelling over the elevated sides of a ramp, nor does it in any way suggest that section 56.9-22's general requirement of berms on elevated roadways is not applicable. In this situation we conclude that it is appropriate to apply section 56.9-22 to the ramp involved. See H.B. Zachry Co. v. OSHRC, 638 F.2d 812, 817-818 (5th Cir. 1981).


Richard V. Beckley, Commissioner


Frank J. Westfall, Commissioner


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

4/ Capitol's pending motion to disregard the Secretary's brief is denied.

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SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

v.

ALLIED PRODUCTS COMPANY

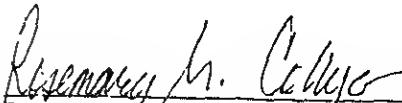
Docket No. SE 79-46-M

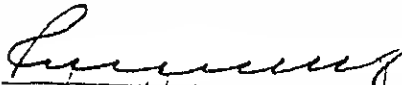
ORDER

In Allied Products Co. v. Federal Mine Safety and Health R
Commission, No. 80-7935, 5th Cir. Unit B (February 1, 1982), re
den. March 9, 1982, the court affirmed a final order of the Com
finding that Allied Products violated three mandatory safety st
2 FMSHRC 2517 (ALJ, Sept. 1980). The court found, however, tha
penalties assessed were an abuse of discretion and remanded for
proceedings "with instructions to recalculate the penalties bas
existing record and on considerations outlined in this opinion.
court's mandate was received by the Commission on April 9, 1982


We need not address at this time the court's discussion of
relationship between the Commission's statutory authority to as
penalties (30 U.S.C. § 820(i)) and the Secretary of Labor's pen
assessment regulations. 30 C.F.R. Part 100. Rather, we leave
administrative law judge the initial determination of the neces
appropriate action in light of the court's decision and remand.

Accordingly, the case is remanded to the administrative la
for further proceedings.


Rosemary M. Collyer, Chairma


Richard V. Backley, Commissi


Frank F. Jestrab, Commission


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

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Patricia Clotfelter
Johnston, Barton, Proctor, Swedlaw & Naff
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4015 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, Virginia 22203

Administrative Law Judge William Fauver
FMSHRC
5203 Leesburg Pike, 10th Floor
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

NATIONAL MINES CORPORATION

v.

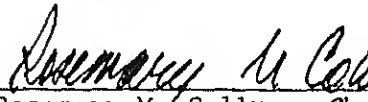
SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

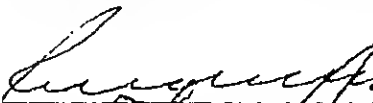
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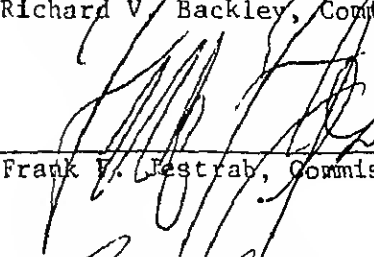
Docket No. KENT 80-

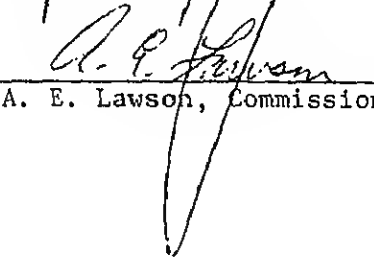
ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. Island Creek Coal Co., et al. etc., D.C. Cir., April 27, 1982, the court remanded this case to the Commission for further proceedings consistent with the court's order in UMWA v. FMSHRC, Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., February 1982. Accordingly, this case is remanded to the administrative law judge for further proceedings consistent with the court's order.


Rosemary M. Collyer, Chair


Richard V. Backley, Commissioner


Frank V. Estrab, Commissioner


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

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Falls Church, Virginia 22041

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

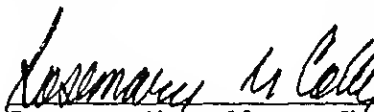
v.

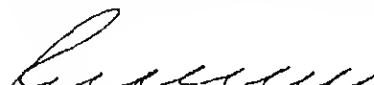
SOUTHERN OHIO COAL COMPANY

Docket No. LAKE 80-


ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. Southern Ohio Coal Co., No. 8
D.C. Cir., April 27, 1982, the court remanded this case to
sion for further proceedings consistent with the court's de
UMWA v. FMSHRC, Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., February 23,
Accordingly, the case is remanded to the administrative law
further proceedings consistent with the court's order.


Rosemary M. Collyer, Cha


Richard V. Backley, Comm


Frank F. Jestrab, Commi


A. E. Lawson, Commission

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VIRGINIA POCAHONTAS COMPANY

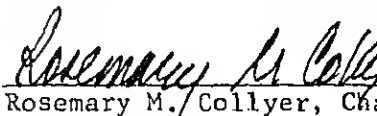
v.

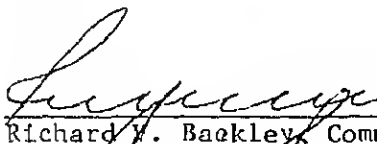
SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

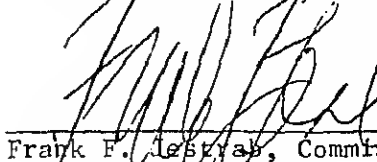
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: Docket Nos. VA 79-1
: VA 79-1
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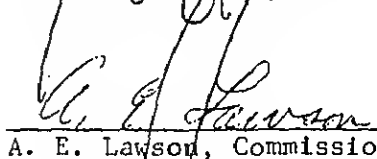
ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. Island Creek Coal Co., et al.
2405, etc., D.C. Cir., April 27, 1982, the court remanded t
to the Commission for further proceedings consistent with t
decision in UMWA v. FMSHRC, Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir.,
1982. Accordingly, these cases are remanded to the adminis
judge for further proceedings consistent with the court's o


Rosemary M. Collyer, Cha


Richard W. Backley, Comm


Frank F. Jastrab, Commi


A. E. Lawson, Commissio

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Administrative Law Judge Richard Steffey
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Falls Church, Virginia 22041

RANGER FUEL CORPORATION

v.

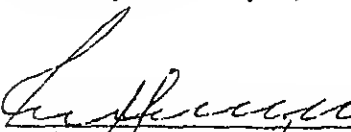
SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

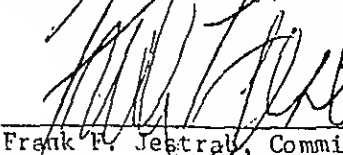
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: Docket No. WEVA 79-
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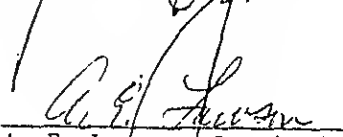
ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. Ranger Fuel Corp., No. 81-134, April 27, 1982, the court remanded this case to the Commission for further proceedings consistent with the court's decision in FMSHRC, Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., February 23, 1982. This case is remanded to the administrative law judge for proceedings consistent with the court's order.


Rosemary M. Collyer, Clerk


Richard W. Backley, Commissioner


Frank F. Jestrup, Commissioner


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

Distribution

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Lebanon, Virginia 24266

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Washington, D.C. 20005

Administrative Law Judge Gary Melick
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5203 Leesburg Pike, 10th Floor
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

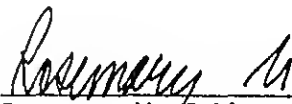
Tom Antonini, Johnny Gibson and
Larry Haley,

v.

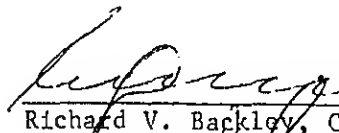
ISLAND CREEK COAL COMPANY

ORDER

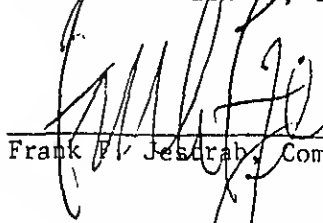
In Secretary of Labor v. FMSHRC, No. 80-1350, D.C. 1982, the court remanded these cases to the Commission for proceedings consistent with the court's decision in UMWA v. FMSHRC, No. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., February 23, 1982. Accordingly, the cases are remanded to the chief administrative law judge for further proceedings consistent with the court's order.

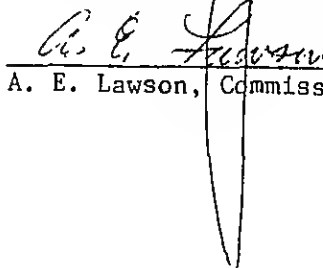


Rosemary M. Collyer,



Richard V. Backley, C


Frank P. Jeschke, Com


A. E. Lawson, Commiss

Distribution

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Lexington, Kentucky 40575

Chief Administrative Law Judge Paul Merlin
FMSHRC
1730 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

ISLAND CREEK COAL COMPANY

v.

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

v.

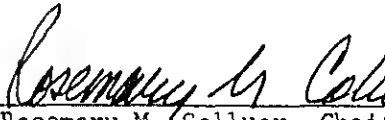
ISLAND CREEK COAL COMPANY

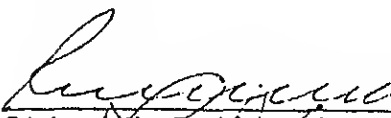
Docket Nos. KENT 79-2
WEVA 79-1
WEVA 79-1


Docket No. WEVA 80-7

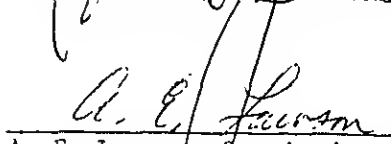
ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. Island Creek Coal Co., No. 80-2
Cir., April 27, 1982, the court remanded these cases to the C
for further proceedings consistent with the court's decision
FMSHRC, Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., February 23, 1982. A
the cases are remanded to the administrative law judge for fu
proceedings consistent with the court's order.


Rosemary M. Collyer, Chair


Richard V. Backley, Commis


Frank F. Jestrab, Commiss


A. E. Lawson, Commissione

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Washington, D.C. 20005

Administrative Law Judge Gary Melick
FMSHRC
5203 Leesburg Pike, 10th Floor
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

ISLAND CREEK COAL COMPANY

v.

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

and

UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

v.

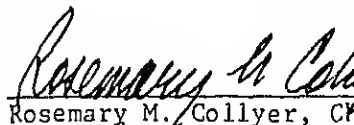
ISLAND CREEK COAL COMPANY

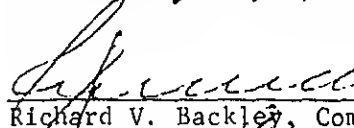
Docket No. VA 79-74

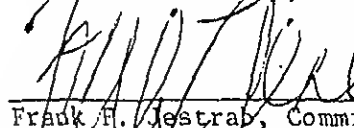
Docket No. VA 80-9

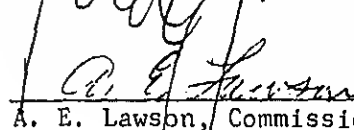
ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. Island Creek Coal Co., et al 2405, etc., D.C. Cir., April 27, 1982, the court remanded to the Commission for further proceedings consistent with decision in UMWA v. FMSHRC, Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., 1982. Accordingly, the cases are remanded to the administrative judge for further proceedings consistent with the court's


Rosemary M. Collyer, Clerk


Richard V. Backley, Clerk


Frank F. Jestrab, Clerk


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

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Administrative Law Judge Richard Steffey
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Falls Church, Virginia 2203

ISLAND CREEK COAL COMPANY

and

VIRGINIA POCAHONTAS COMPANY

v.

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)


and


UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA


May 20, 1982
Docket Nos. VA 7
VA 7
VA 7

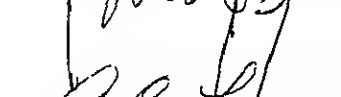
ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. Island Creek Coal Co., et al
1859, D.C. Cir., April 27, 1982, the court remanded these
Commission for further proceedings consistent with the co
in UMWA v. FMSHRC, Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., Februar
Accordingly, the cases are remanded to the administrative
further proceedings consistent with the court's order.


Rosemary M. Collyer, C


Richard V. Backley, Co


Frank E. Gearhart, Comm


A. E. Lawson, Commiss

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Administrative Law Judge George Koutras
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5203 Leesburg Pike, 10th Floor
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

ISLAND CREEK COAL COMPANY

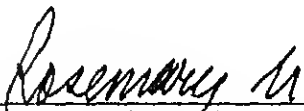
v.

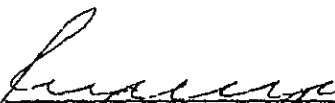
SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

Docket No. WEVA 7


ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. FMSHRC, No. 80-1630, D.C. Cir. 1982, the court remanded this case to the Commission for proceedings consistent with the court's decision in UMWA v. FMSHRC, No. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., February 23, 1982. Accordingly, this case is remanded to the chief administrative law judge for further proceedings consistent with the court's order.


Rosemary M. Collyer, Clerk


Richard V. Backley, Clerk


Frank P. Jastrab, Commissioner


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

Distribution

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Arlington, Virginia 22203

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Chief Administrative Law Judge Paul Merlin
FMSHRC
1730 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

PRINCESS SUSAN COAL COMPANY

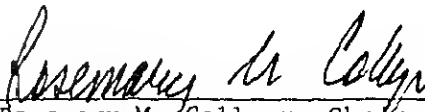
v.

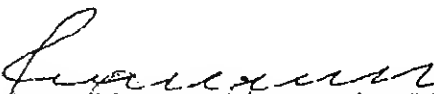
SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

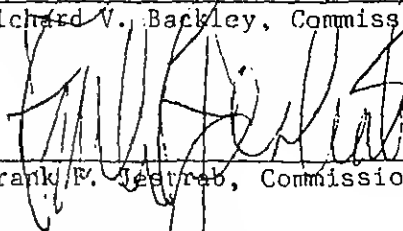
Docket No. WEVA 79-423-

ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. FMSHRC, No. 80-1449, D.C. Cir., A 1982, the court remanded this case to the Commission for further proceedings consistent with the court's decision in UMWA v. FMSHRC 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., February 23, 1982. Accordingly, the case is remanded to the administrative law judge for further proceedings consistent with the court's order.


Rosemary M. Collyer, Chairman


Richard V. Backley, Commissioner


Frank R. Jettre, Commissioner


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

Distribution

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Administrative Law Judge Gary Melick
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Falls Church, Virginia 22041

May 20, 1982

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),
on behalf of
Arnold J. Sparks, Jr.


v.

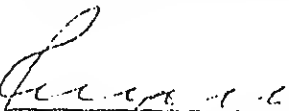
ALLIED CHEMICAL CORPORATION

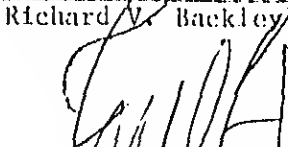
Docket No. WEVA

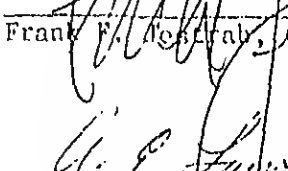
ORDER

On February 23, 1982, the United States Court of A
D.C. Circuit issued its decision in this case reversing
the Commission and remanding for further proceedings.
Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir. (consolidated cases). Ac
remand to the administrative law judge for further proo
with the court's decision.


Rosemary M. Collyer,


Richard V. Backley,


Frank F. Neff,


A. E. Lawson, Commis

Distribution

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Administrative Law Judge Joseph Kennedy
FMSHRC
5203 Leesburg Pike, 10th Floor
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

May 20, 1982

RANGER FUEL CORPORATION,

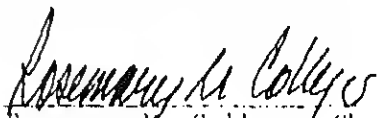
v.

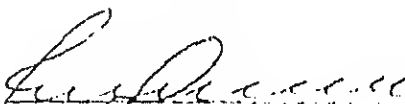
SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

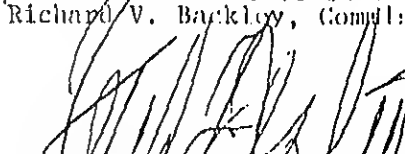
Docket No. WEVA 79-21

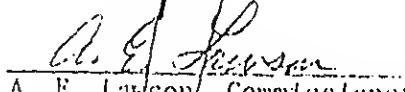
ORDER

In Secretary of Labor v. Island Creek Coal Co., et al., 80-2405, etc., D.C. Cir., April 27, 1982, the court remanded to the Commission for further proceedings consistent with the decision in UMWA v. FMSHRC, Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir., Feb. 1982. Accordingly, this case is remanded to the chief administrative law judge for further proceedings consistent with the court's


Rosemary M. Collyer, Chair


Richard V. Buckley, Comptroller


Frank E. Deserub, Commissioner


A. E. Lawson, Commissioner

Distribution

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900 15th St., N.W.
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Chief Administrative Law Judge Paul Merlin
FMSHRC
5203 Leesburg Pike, 10th Floor
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

May 20, 1982

KENTLAND-ELKHORN COAL
CORPORATION,

v.

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

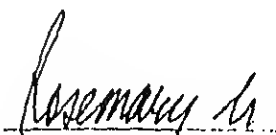
and

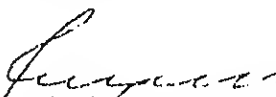
UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA

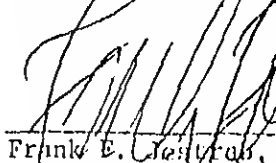
Docket No. PIK

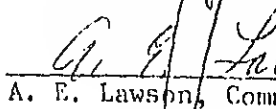
ORDER

On February 23, 1982, the United States Court of D.C. Circuit issued its decision in this case reversing the Commission and remanding for further proceedings. Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir. (consolidated cases). A remand to the administrative law judge for further proceedings consistent with the court's decision.


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Administrative Law Judge Michael Lasher
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Y.


THE HELEN MINING COMPANY


Docket No. PITT

ORDER

On February 23, 1982, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit issued its decision in this case reversing the Commission and remanding for further proceedings. U.S. v. [redacted], Nos. 79-2503, etc., D.C. Cir. (consolidated cases). Accordance with the administrative law judge for further proceedings consistent with the court's decision.

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May 26, 1982

SECRETARY OF LABOR,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

v.

MEDICINE BOW COAL COMPANY

:
:
:
: Docket Nos. WEST
: WEST
:
:
:

DECISION

This consolidated case on interlocutory review involves penalty proceedings arising under section 110(a) of the Safety and Health Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et seq. The issue is whether the Secretary's admitted failure to issue penalty proposals in the two proceedings below within the time prescribed by Commission Rule 27, 29 C.F.R. § 2700.27, warranted dismissal of the cases. For the reasons discussed below, we affirm the administrative law judge's conclusion that under the terms of the Salt Lake County Road Department, 3 FMSHRC 1714 (1981), a citation was not warranted on the facts present in this record.

The facts are not disputed. In the first case (Docket No. WEST 81-163), an MSHA inspector issued five citations to Medicine Bow Coal Company during the period June 24, 1980, through August 1, 1980. In the second case (Docket No. WEST 81-164), the same MSHA inspector issued Medicine Bow another citation on August 26, 1980. 2/ On October 1, 1980, Medicine Bow received the Secretary's proposed assessment of penalties for the six citations. Medicine Bow timely sent notices of contest by certified mail in both cases. After receiving the certified mail return receipts, the notice of contest in the first case was received in the Secretary's Denver, Colorado Assessment Office on January 19, 1981, and the notice in the second case was received on January 20, 1981.

1/ The citations charged violations of various regulations relating to surface coal mining operations. One citation alleged a violation of 30 C.F.R. § 77.504 (damaged insulation on electrical equipment); one alleged a violation of 30 C.F.R. § 77.603 (improper classification of cables); and three alleged violations of 30 C.F.R. § 77.101 (accumulations of combustible material).

2/ This citation alleged a violation of 30 C.F.R. § 77.101 (accumulations of combustible material).

mission Rule 26, 29 C.F.R. § 2700.26, requires the Secretary to "immediately transmit to the Commission the notice of contest, at which time a docket number will be assigned and all parties notified.") On March 20, 1981, the Secretary mailed his penalty proposals in both cases to the Commission, and the documents were received on March 23, 1981.

In relevant part, Commission Rule 27 provides:

(a) When to file. Within 45 days of receipt of a timely notice of contest of a notification or proposed assessment penalty, the Secretary shall file a proposal for a penalty with the Commission.

Applying Rule 27 and with January 19 and 20, 1981, as the respective dates on which the Secretary received Medicine Bow's notices of contest, the Secretary's penalty proposals were due to be filed on March 5, 1981, in the first case, and March 8, 1981, in the second. 4/ Since the Secretary filed on March 20, 1981 (n. 3 below), his proposals were a maximum of 15 days late.

In both cases, Medicine Bow filed motions for dismissal with the judge based on the late filing of the Secretary's penalty proposals. In separate orders issued on August 7, 1981, the judge denied the motion on the basis of our decision in Salt Lake, which was issued on July 2, 1981, after all the relevant filings had occurred in these two cases.

3/ The certificates of service and envelopes used for mailing reflect that the Secretary apparently mailed the penalty proposals by certified mail, although the return receipts are not included in the formal filing. The judge found that there was "no indication in the file" that the Secretary had sent the proposals by certified mail, and treated the documents as having been filed on March 23, 1981, when they were received by the Commission. We give the Secretary the benefit of the doubt in this matter and treat his proposals as having been filed on March 20, 1981, when they were apparently sent by certified mail. See Commission Rule 5(d), 29 C.F.R. § 2700.5(d) (as relevant here, filing effective upon receipt or upon mailing by certified or registered mail, return receipt requested). In any event, the three-day difference in the filing date does not affect our resolution of this case.

4/ The filing date in the second case was actually Saturday, March 20, 1981, but Commission Rule 8(a), 29 C.F.R. § 2700.8(a), would move the due date to the following Monday.

mail. We fear that further delay would be the inevitable result of reading Rule 8(b) into Rule 27. We hold, therefore, that the rule should not apply to the Secretary's filing of penalty proposals.

In his brief to us, the Secretary states that "the Salt Lake reflects the appropriate factors which an appellate law judge should consider in deciding whether or not to affirm a filed proposal for penalty." Br. 6. However, the Secretary's brief with a major premise of Salt Lake--namely, that the Commission "implements" the statutory directive in section 105(d) of the Act that "the Secretary shall immediately advise the Commission of contest of penalty], and the Commission shall afford a hearing." See Salt Lake, 3 FMSHRC at 1715. The Secretary claims that he satisfies this statutory directive by complying with Rule 26, which, as noted above, requires the Secretary to file a notice of contest to "immediately transmit" the notice of contest so that a docket number can be assigned.

5/ We fully endorse the judge's rejection of the Secretary's claim that the date on which such documents are internally stamped should be the notification date. As he stated:

The purpose of sending a document by certified mail is to provide the sender confirmation of its receipt by the receiving party and the date of receipt. This is the only way the operator has notice of and upon which it can base its actions.

The Secretary's statement that it must rely on the bureaucratic processing of the mail] does not reflect the position. Mine operators as well could contend that various office procedures upon which they must rely delay the actual receipt of a notice from the individual charged with the responsibility for that document. The law has traditionally relied on the date on the return receipt as evidence of the date the document was received. I see no reason to give special treatment to the bureaucratic procedures of the government.

(Footnote)

26 and 27 to section 105(d). As developed in Salt Lake, Congress' overriding concern in enacting section 105(d) was providing for prompt penalty enforcement. To effectuate that goal, the Secretary has two related duties under Commission rules after receiving a notice of contest: notifying the Commission's docket office in order that a docket number can be assigned, and filing his penalty proposal so that the crucial stage of the pleading process is started, leading to the hearing that the Commission must provide under section 105(d). That hearing requires more than a docket number; it requires the filing of penalty proposal as an essential pleading. Both procedural steps are form of "notification," one for clerical purposes, and the other for pleading purposes; both implement the Mine Act's mandate for prompt penalty assessment. If the Secretary believes that his clerical notice to the docket office under Rule 26 is sufficient for "notification of the Commission," that may well explain the delays in filing penalty proposals. We accordingly reject the Secretary's position. We now turn to the issue of whether the judge properly refused to dismiss the cases.

The judge correctly interpreted Salt Lake as creating a two-part test. Salt Lake first established that the Secretary must show adequate cause for any delayed filing. 3 FMSHRC at 1715-17. The Secretary's excuse here is basically the same one accepted as minimally adequate in Salt Lake: insufficient clerical help. The excuse was presented in more detail in these cases, and considerably less delay was involved than in Salt Lake. The significant operative events in the two proceedings below occurred prior to our warning in Salt Lake and, thus, the Secretary did not have the benefit of those views when the late filings occurred. Had the delay occurred after our admonition in Salt Lake, our conclusion as to whether adequate cause was established might be different. 6/


We also held in Salt Lake that adequate cause notwithstanding, dismissal could be required where an operator demonstrates prejudice caused by the delayed filing. 3 FMSHRC at 1715-18. Medicine Bow has shown no specific claim of prejudice such as missing witnesses, or lateness so great as to unduly delay a hearing. Medicine Bow's argument that during the pendency of the case it is effectively forced to comply with MSHA's interpretation of standards and that the citations are carried on MSHA's records, presents nothing more than the unavoidable consequences of a contested citation faced by all operators. As the judge reasoned, the relatively short delay here did not result in any significantly later hearing, and if Medicine Bow wanted expedited proceedings, it should have so moved. In short, Medicine Bow has failed

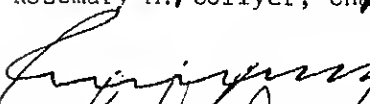
fn. 5/ continued

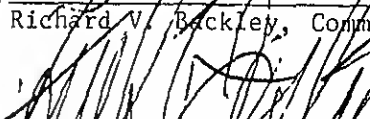
The Secretary did not press this argument on review. The Secretary also states that steps have been taken to improve the internal mail routing of notices of contest--a development that we hope augurs well for increased efficiency in processing penalty cases.


6/ We reject the suggestion in the Secretary's brief that unless his delayed filing is caused by "significant malfeasance," a penalty proceeding should not be dismissed absent prejudice to the operator. Our test is adequate cause, not absence of malfeasance, significant or

for further proceedings.


Rosemary M. Collyer, Cha


Richard V. Backley, Comm


Frank E. Jestrab, Commis


A. E. Lawson, Commission

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Administrative Law Judge John Morris
FMSHRC
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Administrative Law Judge Decisions

MAY 3

SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Complaint of Discharge,
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	Discrimination, or Interference
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	
ex rel Phillip Dennis Irvin,	:	Docket No. LAKE 82-5-D
et al.,	:	
	:	
Applicants	:	Eagle No. 2 Mine
v.	:	
	:	
PEABODY COAL COMPANY,	:	
Respondent	:	

DECISION

Appearances: Rafael Alvarez, Esq., Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of Labor, Chicago, Illinois, for Complainants Thomas R. Gallagher, Esq., and Michael O. McKown, Esq., St. Louis, Missouri, for Respondent.

Before: Administrative Law Judge Broderick

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

This proceeding is an action brought by the Secretary of Labor on behalf of 70 miners employed in February 1981 at Respondent's Eagle No. 2 Mine alleging that the named miners were discriminated against in violation of section 105(c) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et seq. Pursuant to notice, a hearing was held in St. Louis, Missouri, on February 18, 1982. Forrest A. Younker was called as an adverse witness by Applicants and Ownly Franklin Williams, Phillip Dennis Irvin, William Henry Gibson and Narnie E. Nangle testified on behalf of Complainants. Forrest A. Younker testified on behalf of Respondent. The parties agreed that the depositions of Narnie E. Nangle, Robert Walker and Mike Wolfe may be received as evidence. Sixteen joint exhibits were admitted, and 2 additional exhibits were offered by Applicants and admitted. Posthearing briefs were filed by both parties.

Based on the entire record and considering the contentions of the parties, I make the following decision:

for male employees, one for female employees and one for children. 5. The male employee's shower room was approximately 40 feet by 12 feet wide and 7 feet high. The floor and walls were concrete. There were two doors and no windows. On February 12, 1931, there were two fluorescent lights in the room suspended from a metal ceiling, each with two bulbs, a metal casing and a plexiglass bottom. There were two ventilation fans and two floor drains with metal grates. There were approximately 25 to 30 shower heads.

6. Above the shower room on a metal floor was a 3,000 gallon hot water tank and four electrically operated water heaters.

7. On February 12, 1931, during the C shift (12:01 a.m. to 3:00 a.m.), a leak developed in the hot water tank. Repairs were attempted on the tank before 3:00 a.m., and hot water was not available for the C shift employees. The employees on the A shift were assured that the tank would be repaired prior to the completion of their shift, and they entered the mine on the basis of that assurance. The tank was repaired about 10:00 a.m. but developed another leak at about 11:00 a.m. This leak could not be repaired without completely draining the tank, thus making showers unavailable for both the A and B shift employees. A trough was made to drain the leaking water down through the roof of the shower room.

8. The leaking water entered the fluorescent light fixture at the north end of the room. Water collected in the fixture and dripped down on to the floor of the shower room. The wire was cut to the fixture but the power remained on.

9. Representatives of the miners were concerned about the controversy involved to those who might shower in these circumstances and had a meeting with mine management, commencing at about 3:55 p.m., February 12, 1931. The B shift employees did not enter the mine at the beginning of the B shift because of this controversy.

in order to repair it. However, this would make the shower unavailable to all the employees on the three shifts. (2) Use the female employees' and foremen's shower rooms. However this would provide only 11 shower heads for 77 employees on the B shift. (3) Cut off the power and install a temporary lighting system using cap lamps. The third alternative was proposed by the Superintendent to the employee representatives but they rejected it and called State and Federal inspectors.

11. The State inspector arrived at the mine at about 6:00 p.m. He found some "irregular things" in one of the heaters which were repaired immediately. He stated to the miners representatives that he saw nothing wrong in using temporary lighting in the shower room until the tank was repaired on the weekend.

12. The miners on the B crew were not satisfied, refused to work and left the mine premises.

13. A federal inspector arrived at the mine at about 10:30 p.m. At that time the power had been cut off to the fluorescent lights under certain conditions respecting the heater had been or were being taken care of. The federal inspector stated that he would have no objection to the use of battery operated cap lamps to provide light for the shower room.

14. Complainant William Gibson who worked on the C shift room with five other employees from their homes in Kentucky (about 80 miles or more to the mine). Because the shower room was not available the previous morning, Gibson called the mine office before leaving work on January 12 (he was to work 12:01 to 8:00 on January 13) and was assured that the tank would be repaired in time for his shift.

15. When Mr. Gibson and his crew arrived at the mine, the tank was still being worked on, and the lights in the shower room were out. Because he objected to these conditions, Mr. Gibson and eight other employees from the C shift (calling themselves "the boys from Kentucky") refused to go underground and went home "for safety reasons."

16. The other members of the C shift worked their regular shift and took showers afterwards using camp lamps for lighting.

17. The employees on B and C shifts were not paid for the shift in which they refused to work. Each also received a letter of warning of disciplinary action.

20. Prior to the hearing in this case, the letters issued to the Complainants herein were rescinded and removed from their employment records.

STATUTORY PROVISION

Section 105(e)(1) of the Act provides:

(c)(1) No person shall discharge or in any manner discriminate against or cause to be discharged or otherwise discriminate against or otherwise interfere with the exercise of the statutory rights of any miner, representative of miners or applicant for employment in a coal or other mine subject to this Act because such miner, representative of miners or applicant for employment has filed or made a complaint under or related to this Act, including a complaint notifying the operator or the operator's agent, or the representative of miners at the coal or other mine of an alleged danger or safety or health violation in a coal or other mine or because such miner, representative of miners or applicant for employment is the subject of medical evaluations and potential transfer under a standard published pursuant to Section 101 or because such representative of miners or applicant for employment has instituted or caused to be instituted any proceeding under or related to this Act or has testified about to testify in any such proceeding, or because the exercise by such miner, representative of miner or applicant for employment on behalf of himself or of any statutory right afforded by this Act.

ISSUES

1. Were Applicants disciplined by Respondent for being protected under the Mine Act?
2. If so, what is the remedy for the violation?

2. Applicants, miners on the B and C shifts, failed to establish that their refusal to perform work on February 12 and 13, 1981, resulted from a reasonable, good faith belief that it was hazardous to do so.

DISCUSSION

Refusal to perform work is protected under section 105(c)(1) of the Act if it results from a good faith belief that the work involves safety hazards, and if the belief is a reasonable one. Secretary of Labor v. Consolidation Coal Co., 2 FMSHRC 2736, 2 BNA MSHC 1001 (1980), reversed on other grounds sub nom Consolidation Coal Co. v. Marshall,

(3rd Cir. 1981); Secretary of Labor/Rohinette v. United Castl Co., 3 FMSHRC 803, 2 BNA MSHC 1213 (1981). I conclude that the objections raised by the B shift miners to showering in a room where water was running through electric light fixtures were reasonable and were made in good faith. Respondent concedes that at that time the miners had a good faith reasonable belief of the possibility of a shock hazard. However, Respondent offered an alternative, i.e., cutting off the electricity and using temporary lighting in the form of cap lamps. This proposal removed the potentially dangerous condition and provided shower facilities which were adequate. The State mine inspector stated that he could see nothing wrong with the proposed temporary lighting. The refusal of the B shift employees to work under these circumstances became at that point unreasonable and therefore was not protected by the Act. See Secretary/Bennett v. Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation, 3 FMSHRC 1539 (1981). The electricity had been removed from the fluorescent lights and the water heater was being repaired at the time the C shift employees refused to go into the mine. Both the State and Federal mine inspectors had indicated that the condition was no longer a hazard. I conclude that the refusal of the miners on the C shift to go to work was unreasonable and not protected under the Act.

3. The failure of Respondent to pay Applicants for the time they did not work on February 12 and 13, 1981, was not a violation of section 105(c)(1) of the Act.

Distribution: By certified mail

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Thomas R. Gallagher, Esq., Peabody Coal Company, Inc.
St. Louis, MO 63166

MAY 11 1982

VICTOR McCOY, : Complaint of Discharge,
Complainant : Discrimination, or Interference
v. :
: Docket No. PIKE 77-71
CRESCENT COAL COMPANY, :
CRESCENT INDUSTRIES, :
INTERNATIONAL MINERALS AND :
CHEMICALS CORPORATION (INC), :
Respondents :

ORDER APPROVING SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

On September 28, 1981, I issued a decision in this proceeding in which I found that Complainant was discharged by Respondent on April 22, 1977, in violation of section 110(b) of the Coal Mine Safety Act of 1969. I ordered that Respondent Crescent Coal Company offer Complainant reinstatement in the position from which he was discharged; that Respondent pay him back pay with interest thereon from the date of discharge until he is offered reinstatement; and that Respondent Crescent pay a reasonable attorney's fee for services rendered by counsel for Complainant.

Pursuant to notice, a hearing was called on May 4, 1982, in Pikeville, Kentucky, for the purpose of receiving evidence on the issue of the amount of Complainant's entitlement to back pay and attorneys' fees.

After the commencement of the hearing, the parties agreed to settle Complainant's claims and stated their agreement on the record as follows:

1. Respondents agree not to seek review of my decision of September 28, 1981, on the merits of the Complainant.
2. Reinstatement will not be provided or offered Complainant.
3. Respondents shall pay to Complainant Victor McCoy the sum of \$55,000 in full settlement of his claim for back wages and interest resulting from his discharge on April 22, 1977.

5. The rights of Respondents among themselves and the amounts due hereunder are not determined by this order.

The agreement was explained to Complainant on the record. Complainant expressed his understanding of it, and his agreement to it. Having duly considered the matter, I conclude that the agreement serves the best interest of Complainant and serves the purposes of the Act.

Therefore, IT IS ORDERED that the settlement agreement be approved. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED

1. that Complainant has no right to reinstatement, under paragraph 1 of my order of September 28, 1981, or otherwise.

2. Within 40 days of the date of this order, Respondent pay to Complainant the sum of \$55,000 as back wages and interest under paragraph 2 of my order of September 28, 1981.

3. Within 40 days of the date of this order, Respondent pay to Complainant the sum of \$45,000 as attorneys' fees and expenses due under paragraph 3 of my order of September 28, 1981.

4. Upon payments of the amounts recited in paragraphs 2 and 3 above, Complainant will have no further claim under the Mine Safety Act of 1969 against Respondents arising out of this order on April 22, 1977.

5. The rights of Respondents as among themselves are determined by this order.

James A. Broderick
James A. Broderick
Administrative Law Judge

Distribution: By certified mail

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Oan Jack Combs, Esq., Combs and Lester, P.S.C., 207 Carol Lane, Pikeville, KY 41501

SECRETARY OF LABOR, MINE SAFETY AND
HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),

Petitioner,

v.

& F MENDISCO MINING COMPANY,

Respondent.

CIVIL PENALTY PROCEEDING

DOCKET NO. WEST 80-458-M

MSHA Case No. 42-00472-05006 F

Mine: Rim Columbu

Appearances:

James H. Barkley, Esq., and

Katherine Vigil, Esq.

Office of Henry C. Mahlman, Regional Solicitor

United States Department of Labor, Denver, Colorado

For the Petitioner

Gary Cowan, Esq.

Grand Junction, Colorado

For the Respondent

Before: Judge John J. Morria

DECISION

The Secretary of Labor, on behalf of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Administration, (MSHA), chargea respondent, F & F Mendisco Company (Mendisco), with violating Title 30, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 7.12-13, 1/ a safety regulation adopted under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act, 30 U.S.C. 801 et aeq.

1/ 57.12-13 Mandatory. Permanent aplicea and repairs made in power cablea, including the ground conductor where provided, shall be: (a) Mechanically atrong with electrical conductivity aa near as possible to that of the original; (b) Insulated to a degree at least equal to that of the original, and aealed to exclude moiature; and, (c) Provided with d protection as near as possible to that of the original, including good bonding to the outer jacket.

operator, can prevail on the defense that he was an independent contractor in relation to the owner of the property. 2/

Additional issues are whether respondent violated the regulation, if so, what penalty is appropriate.

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE

Jackie Lewis Garrison, in his 19th year, died on the third day of employment with the Mendisco Company (Tr. 47, 50, 51, P16). On the fatal day Garrison was working alone as the grizzly man at the bottom of a compartment shaft (Tr. 8, 47, 48). The electrocution occurred on the landing in the sump of the mine. A cable carrying 460 volts supplied to the pump (Tr. 8).

The inspection took place on the day of the fatality. The MSHA inspector observed a bad splice with an exposed lead just below the tie down wire (Tr. 10, 12). There was water on the splice and very little insulation (Tr. 20, 21). If a person contacted the hot lead he would be exposed to 220 volts (Tr. 24). Drawings, photographs of the area, and defective splice were received in evidence (Exhibits P2-P14).

MSHA witness Craig Miller, an electrical engineer, testified in detail. He dissected the bad splice and concluded that a person could be electrocuted if he contacted the energized wire (Tr. 68, 69). The wires at the splice were corroded and merely twisted together in a knot (Tr. 72).

After visiting the site witness Miller determined that Garrison was electrocuted in this fashion: when he climbed down into the sump he leaned against the ladder and with the wire rope from the tugger motor wrapped around his left wrist he was exposed to the conductor. The wire rope had ridden down the cable to the bad splice (Tr. 79-80, 91, 98).

2/ In Cathedral Bluffs Shale Oil Company, WEST 81-186-M, an unrelated case decided this date, the mine owner, retaining project control by contract, defends on the basis that the liability lies with its independent contractor.

Respondent Mendisco leases this mine from Atlas Minerals (Atlas) (Tr. 8, 30, 37, 47). Mendisco does the mining and Atlas has agreed to install and maintain the electrical system (Tr. 130, 131, 134, 147, 148, R3).

If Mendisco had an electrical problem they would contact Atlas to remedy it. MSHA found no evidence that Mendisco knew of the bad splice (Tr. 41, 49).

DISCUSSION

Mendisco asserts, as a threshold matter, that it is not responsible for the defective wiring. The defense pivots on the basis that Mendisco is an independent contractor as to Atlas. It further relies on its agreement with Atlas and argues that Atlas and not Mendisco should have been cited. Mendisco further relies on the Secretary's guidelines relating to independent contractors.

The independent contractor cases arise in the Commission decision in Republic Steel Corporation, 1 FMSHRC 5, and its progeny. Generally such cases arise when the Secretary seeks to impose a penalty on a mine operator for an act performed by the operator's independent contractor. Cf U.S. Steel Corporation, 4 FMSHRC 163, (February 1982).

Mendisco's reliance on the doctrine is misplaced. In this factual setting Mendisco was the mine operator. It did the mining, its employees were exposed and it could have eliminated the hazard. In these circumstances Mendisco's legal relationship with Atlas is not relevant nor is it a defense.

The recent Commission decision of Phillips Uranium Corporation, CE 9-281-M (April 27, 1982) is not applicable here. The Phillips doctrine is limited by two factors. These are, first, the owner is not in violation of the Act where he has retained an independent company with experience and expertise in the activity being undertaken, and, two, where the employees of the owner do not perform any work other than to observe the progress of the work to assure compliance with quality control and contract specifications (slip op. 1, 2).

Mendisco further contends that the electrocution could not have occurred as outlined by MSHA's evidence. This contention rests in part on Felix Mendisco's testimony concerning the positioning of the wire tugger cable and a likelihood that the cable could not contact the defective splice. I am not persuaded. At the time of the accident MSHA experts

CIVIL PENALTY

Section 110(i) of the Act [30 U.S.C. 820(i)] provides as follows:

The Commission shall have authority to assess all civil penalties provided in this Act. In assessing civil monetary penalties, the Commission shall consider the operator's history of previous violations, the appropriateness of such penalty to the size of the business of the operator charged, whether the operator was negligent, the effect on the operator's ability to continue in business, the gravity of the violation and the demonstrated good faith of the person charged in attempting to achieve rapid compliance after notification of a violation.

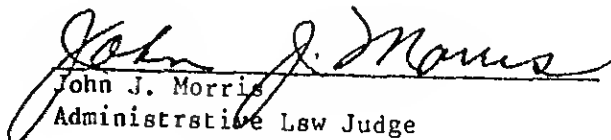
The Secretary proposes a civil penalty of \$4,000 for this violation.

In reviewing the statutory criteria I note that the facts favorable to Mendisco include the lack of any prior violations and the company's small size (Tr. 48, 126). The negligence and gravity are apparent. I hesitate to assess the proposed penalty since it appears that a \$4,000 penalty would be unduly burdensome on the company. On the other hand, the purposes of the Act require a substantial penalty to alert at least this company that the safety and health of miners must have a high priority in the Company's activities. In sum, and in view of the statutory criteria, I conclude that a penalty of \$1,000 is appropriate.

Based on the foregoing findings of fact and conclusions of law I enter the following

ORDER

1. Citation 336665 is affirmed.
2. A penalty of \$1,000 is assessed.
3. Respondent is ordered to pay said sum within 40 days of the date of this order.


John J. Morris
Administrative Law Judge

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MAY 12 19

SECRETARY OF LABOR, MINE SAFETY AND
HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),

Petitioner,

v.

CATHEDRAL BLUFFS SHALE OIL COMPANY,

Respondent,

CIVIL PENALTY PROCEEDING

DOCKET NO. WEST 81-186-M

A/C No. 05-03140-05005

Mine: Cathedral Bluffs Shale

Appearances:

James H. Barkley, Esq., and
Katherine Vigil, Esq.
Office of Henry C. Mahlman, Regional Solicitor
United States Department of Labor
Denver, Colorado 80294
For the Petitioner

James M. Day, Esq.
Cotten, Day and Doyle
Washington, D.C. 20036
For the Respondent

Before: Judge John J. Morris

DECISION

The Secretary of Labor, on behalf of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Administration, (MSHA), charges respondent, Cathedral Bluffs Shale Oil Company, (Cathedral), with violating Title 30, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 37.19-100, 1/ a safety regulation adopted under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act, 30 U.S.C. 801 et seq.

1/ The cited regulation provides as follows: 30 CFR 57.19-100:

57.19-100 Mandatory. Shaft landings shall be equipped with substantial safety gates so constructed that materials will not go through or under them; gates shall be closed except when loading or unloading shaft conveyances.

where such owner has retained an independent company with experience and expertise in sinking shafts and where the owner's exposed employees are quality control and safety inspectors. 2/

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE

On the date of this inspection there was a chain but no safety gate at level 1050. The shaft bottom was one hundred feet below this station (Tr. 11). If miners were in the shaft they could be struck by falling objects (Tr. 7, 8, 41).

Occidental Shale Oil Company (Occidental), as the owner-operator, contracted with the Gilbert Corporation of Delaware (Gilbert) (Tr. 11, 41). Gilbert was to serve as the contractor in sinking shafts at the Cathedral Bluffs Shale Oil project (Tr. 20, 41). Portions of the contract received in evidence indicates considerable reliance by Occidental on the expertise of Gilbert (41).

On September 4, 1980, MSHA inspector Michael Dennehy issued Citation 27786 against the operator and the contractor. 3/ The citation was against the operator, Occidental, because they engineered the shaft and quality control men checking on its completion (Tr. 20). However, the inspector conceded that he had never seen any Occidental employees other than quality inspectors 4/ working in the shaft (Tr. 17). Gilbert, the contractor, had a continuing presence on the project and its workers were exposed to the hazard (Tr. 19, 31).

According to the contract Gilbert, who is designated as an independent contractor, (41, page 1) agrees to comply with all applicable laws, rules and regulations (41, page 15).

2/ In F & F Mendisco, WEST 80-458-M, an unrelated case decided this date, a mine operator whose employees were exposed defended on the basis that the legal relationship to the owner was that of an independent contractor.

3/ The record does not reflect what disposition was made of the citation against contractor Gilbert.

4/ The inspector also testified that Occidental safety inspectors were working in the shaft. However, except for the incidental activities of Occidental safety inspectors Parker and McClung, infra, I find the only Occidental shaft workers were those individuals inspecting the quality of the workmanship (Tr. 62).

than by contract (Tr. 56, 60). Any hazards observed by Occidental employees should be reported to Gilbert. The hazard would either or Gilbert would lose its contract (Tr. 50).

DISCUSSION

The recent Commission decision of Phillips Uranium Corporation 79-281-M (April 27, 1982), is dispositive of this case. The Commission holds that liability for a violation may not be imposed against an operator where the owner has retained an independent company with experience and expertise in the activity being undertaken and where the owner's exposed employees do not perform any other work other than to observe the progress of the contractor's activities to assure compliance with quality control and contract specifications, (slip op. 1, 2). I further note that Gilbert in this case was sinking mine shafts, the same specialized activity undertaken by the contractor in Phillips.

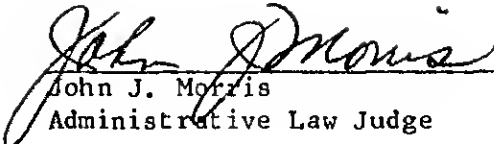
Petitioner in his post trial brief contends that Occidental is liable because its employees were exposed to the hazard and it had the duty to require abatement.

Concerning the Occidental employees exposed to the hazard: the evidence at best shows the only Occidental employees possibly exposed were checking quality control in the shaft. I agree that in January 1979, Parker, an Occidental safety inspector, took underground gas samples. I further agree that Don McClung, the Occidental Safety and Health Officer, had been down the shaft two or three times (Tr. 47-49). However, in my view, such activities fall within the the doctrine expressed in Phillips.

Petitioner further argues that one hundred Occidental employees were exposed. However, the evidence does not stretch as far as petitioner contends. There may be one hundred Occidental employees at the site but except as indicated above no witness places any such employees in the shaft (Tr. 67-68).

I agree with petitioner's contention that Occidental had a duty to abate the hazard. Such a right was by contract.

On the authority of Phillips, I conclude that the citation should be vacated.


John J. Morris
Administrative Law Judge

Distribution:

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SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Civil Penalty Proceeding
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	Docket No. LAKE 31-185-M
Petitioner	:	A.C. No. 21-00820-05027
v.	:	
	:	Minntac Plant
UNITED STATES STEEL CORPORATION,	:	
Respondent	:	
	:	
LOCAL UNION 1938, DISTRICT 33,	:	
UNITED STEELWORKERS OF AMERICA,	:	
Representative of the Miners	:	

DECISION

Appearances: Robert A. Cohen, Esq., Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of Labor, Arlington, Virginia, for Petitioner; Louise Q. Symons, Esq., United States Steel Corporation, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for Respondent; Clifford Kasenan, Safety Chairman, Local 1938, United Steelworkers of America, Virginia, Minnesota, for Representative of the Miners.

Before: Administrative Law Judge Broderick

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

In this proceeding, the Secretary seeks a penalty for the violation of 30 C.F.R. § 55.14-29 which proscribes repairs or maintenance on machinery until the power is off and the machinery is blocked against motion. Pursuant to notice the case was heard in Duluth, Minnesota on March 23, 1982. Federal mine inspector Thomas Wasley, and Michael Tintor testified on behalf of Petitioner. Richard Maki, Rod Robillard and Ronald Ranalta testified on behalf of Respondent. No witnesses were called by the Representative of the Miners. Petitioner and Respondent have filed posthearing briefs. Based on the entire record and considering the contentions of the parties, I make the following decision:

operator of the Minntac Plant, a mine as defined in the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977. The subject plant produces goods which enter interstate commerce.

2. Respondent is a large operator and the assessment of a penalty will not affect its ability to continue in business.

3. A total of 180 violations were assessed against the subject mine within the 24 months prior to the violation charged herein, of which 170 have been paid.

4. Respondent demonstrated good faith abatement after the issue of the citation involved in this proceeding.

5. On April 14, 1981, three laborers in the fines crusher building of the Minntac Plant were engaged in shovelling material that had dropped to the floor from a conveyor belt. The material was shovelled into a wheelbarrow and dumped away from the beltline.

6. The belt was moving while the laborers were shovelling. There was approximately 18 inches of material buildup under the belt, and the laborers were shovelling under the belt.

7. There were two bars in front of the belt designed to prevent workers from walking into or falling into the belt or rollers. The material buildup under the belt was approximately the height of the lower bar.

8. It was possible to put a shovel between the bars to break up the material under the belt. It would be difficult to remove the material in this way.

9. A pinch point existed between the belt and the pulley, and could have been reached if a long handled shovel was inserted between the two bars.

10. Inspector Wasley issued a citation alleging a violation of 30 C.F.R. § 55.14-29. He contended that shovelling material from under the belt constituted maintenance of the beltline.

11. The citation was terminated when Respondent had the employee removed from the area and instructed in the hazard involved.

12. The shovels being used were long handled shovels without a hand grip and were approximately 4-1/2 to 5 feet long.

REGULATION

30 C.F.R. § 55.14-29 provides: "Repairs or maintenance be performed on machinery until the power is off and the machinery is blocked against motion, except where machinery motion is necessary to make adjustments."

ISSUES

1. Whether shovelling material from under a belt line constitutes repairs or maintenance on machinery?
2. If a violation of the mandatory standard was established, what is the appropriate penalty?

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Respondent is subject to the provisions of the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1977 in its operation of the Mine.
2. The undersigned Administrative Law Judge has jurisdiction over the parties and subject matter of this proceeding.
3. Shovelling spilled material from under a belt does not constitute repairs or maintenance on machinery.

DISCUSSION

The wording of the mandatory standard is clear - prohibits performing repairs or maintenance on moving machinery except where motion is necessary to make adjustments. It cannot reasonably be stretched to forbid cleanup under a belt which may expose a worker to a pinch point. The fact that the Respondent stated that he would accept a guard as an abatement of the violation makes it apparent that he was confusing the standard for repairs or maintenance. Respondent was cited with another standard requiring guarding of machinery parts which might be contacted by persons. The provision in the cited standard which would permit repairs or maintenance on moving machinery if a guard is provided. In any event, it appears clear to me that the activity described in the subject citation, whatever hazard might have been involved, did not constitute repairs or maintenance on moving machinery.

ORDERED that the citation is VACATED and this proceeding is DISMISSED.

James A. Broderick

James A. Broderick
Administrative Law Judge

Distribution: By certified mail

Robert A. Cohen, Esq., Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of
Labor, 4015 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22203

Louise Q. Symons, Esq., Attorney for United States Steel Corporation,
1000 Grant Street, Room 1580, Pittsburgh, PA 15230

Clifford Kasenen, Safety Chairman, Local Union 1938, United Steelworkers
of America, 307 First Street North, Virginia, MN 55702

SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Civil Penalty Proceedings
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	Docket Nos. SE 80-21-M
Petitioner		SE 80-61-M
		SE 80-73-M
		SE 80-79-M
		SE 81-6-M
v.		
CAROLINA STALITE COMPANY,	:	
Respondent	:	Stalite Mill

DECISION AND ORDER GRANTING RESPONDENT'S
MOTION FOR SUMMARY DECISION

In view of the Solicitor's frequent failure to respond to critical motions, on May 4, 1982, I issued a written order requiring the Secretary to "fully respond" to Respondent's Motion for Summary Decision. Petitioner's response merely urged that an extension be granted pending its appeal of the dispositive decision of the Commission to the United States Court of Appeals.

By its decision dated March 29, 1982, the Commission determined that the Respondent was not a mine subject to the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977. Secretary v. Carolina Stalite Company, 4 MSHRC 423 (1982). Accordingly, Respondent's motion is granted and the five subject penalty proceedings are dismissed.


Michael A. Lasher, Jr., Judge

Distribution:

James H. Woodson, Deputy Regional Solicitor; Ken S. Welsch, Esq.,
Office of the Solicitor, U. S. Department of Labor, 1371 Peachtree
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William C. Kluttz, Jr., Esq., Kluttz, Hamlin, Reamer, Blankenship
& Kluttz, 131 N. Main St., P. O. Drawer 1617, Salisbury, NC 28144
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SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Civil Penalty Proceedings
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	Docket No. WEVA 81-397
Petitioner	:	A/O No. 46-05653-03009
v.	:	
	:	Docket No. WEVA 81-433
CLAY KITTANNING COAL CO.,	:	A/O No. 46-05653-03010V
Respondent	:	
	:	Gail Mine

DECISION AND ORDER

These matters came on for an evidentiary hearing that, with the consent of the parties, was converted to a settlement conference in Beckley, West Virginia on April 21, 1982.

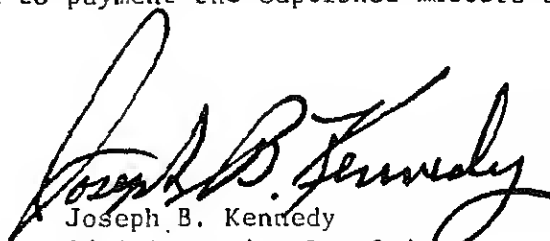
The operator, who appeared pro se, initially took the position that he was not responsible for the violations charged because he was the lessee of the mineral rights and had contracted with a third party to extract the coal. There was no dispute about the fact that the contract miner, who had never been identified as the operator, had committed the violations. Nor was there any dispute about the fact that Mr. Ray, the lessee-operator, had worked closely with his contract miner. Mr. Ray was understandably chagrined over his claim that he was being held monetarily responsible for violations committed by a contract miner and that the contractor had never paid the royalty due under the contract. On the other hand, Mr. Ray conceded he was responsible for employing the contractor and that the contractor was not a safe operator.

I told Mr. Ray that under the statute as both originally written and amended a lessee-operator is vicariously liable for violations committed by his contractors. Mitigating circumstances may be shown by such operators but under the circumstances presented I could see no basis for diminishing Mr. Ray's responsibility. 1/

2/ In its decision of April 27, 1982 in the Phillips Uranium case the Commission held that the Secretary's refusal to proceed against a construction contractor either directly or by impleading the independent contractor was an abuse of prosecutorial discretion that required the sanction of dismissal of the charges against the owner-operator. The Commission was obviously displeased with the rigidity in the solicitor's mitigating posture. I do not believe the Commission intended to hold that owner-operators or lessee-operators are no longer jointly and severally liable for violations committed by their contractors.

Based on an independent evaluation and de novo review of the circumstances, I find the settlement proposed is in accord with the purposes and policy of the Act.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the motions to approve settlement be, and hereby are, APPROVED. It is FURTHER ORDERED that the operator pay the amount of the settlement agreed upon, \$3,570, on or before April 30, 1983 and that subject to payment the captioned matters be DISMISSED.



Joseph B. Kennedy
Administrative Law Judge

Distribution:

William A. Ray, President, Clay Kittanning Coal Co., Inc., Box 2
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David Street, Esq., Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of
3535 Market St., Philadelphia, PA 19104 (Certified Mail)

MAY 18 1982

SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Civil Penalty Proceeding
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	Docket No. LAKE 82-36-11
Petitioner	:	A.O. No. 21-00282-05029
v.	:	
	:	Minntac Mine
UNITED STATES STEEL CORPORATION,	:	
Respondent	:	
	:	
UNITED STATES STEEL CORPORATION,	:	Contest of Citation
Contestant	:	
v.	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-191-RM
	:	Citation No. 436750; 7/30/81
SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	Minntac Mine
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	
Respondent	:	
	:	
LOCAL UNION NO. 1938, DISTRICT 33,	:	
UNITED STEELWORKERS OF AMERICA,	:	
Representative of the Miners	:	

DECISION

Appearances: Robert A. Cohen, Esq., Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of Labor, Arlington, Virginia, on behalf of the Secretary of Labor;
Louise Q. Symons, Esq., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on behalf of United States Steel Corporation;
Clifford Kasenan, Safety Chairman, Local Union 1938, United Steelworkers of America, Virginia, Minnesota, on behalf of the Representative of the Miners.

Before: Administrative Law Judge Broderick

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The two cases have been consolidated since they both involve the same citation. The notice of contest filed by U.S. Steel challenges

Representative of the Miners. The Secretary and U.S. Steel have read posthearing briefs. Based on the entire record and considering the contentions of the parties, I make the following decision.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. At all times pertinent to this proceeding, U.S. Steel was the operator of the Minntac Plant, a mine as defined in the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977. The subject plant produces goods which enter interstate commerce.
2. U.S. Steel is a large operator, and the assessment of a penalty will not affect its ability to continue in business.
3. A total of 180 violations were assessed against the subject mine within the 24 months prior to the violation involved herein, of which 170 have been paid.
4. Respondent demonstrated good faith in abating the condition after the issuance of the citation involved in this proceeding.
5. In July, 1981, and for some time prior to that, it was a common practice at the subject mine for drivers of 85 ton and 120 ton haulage trucks to check the oil level while the truck motor was running.
6. Newly hired truck drivers since 1977 have been instructed by U.S. Steel to turn off the truck engine while checking the oil.
7. On July 30, 1981, the driver of a Wabco truck (No. 528) with a Cummins engine checked the oil in his vehicle while the motor was running.
8. In checking the oil, it is necessary to place one's foot on the bottom step of a boarding ladder, take a hand hold on a grab iron or radiator brace and pull oneself up to the exposed engine.
9. There was a pinch point between the V-belt on the alternator and the alternator pulley located at the front or right hand side of the alternator from the point of view of the person on the ladder.
10. The oil dipstick was toward the back or left hand side of the ladder. It was approximately 16 inches from the alternator pulley. The pinch point was approximately 18 inches from the grab iron.

to prevent persons from contacting it, and the equipment operator so that he checked the engine oil with the engine running.

12. The citation was terminated when U.S. Steel fabricated and installed a guard over the alternator and its V-belt assembly. The inspector refused to accept as abatement the company's proposal that it issue a "job safety procedure" instructing the equipment operator to shut down the trucks before checking the engine oil.

13. The inspector testified at the hearing that mechanics check the timing of the engine might also be exposed to the pinch point. This aspect of the alleged hazard was not included in the citation, nor was it part of the reason for issuing the citation. I am not considering it in this proceeding.

REGULATION

30 C.F.R. § 55.14-1 provides as follows: "Gears; sprockets; chains; drive, head, tail, and takeup pulleys; flywheels; couplings; shafts; sawblades; fan inlets; and similar exposed moving machine parts which may be contacted by persons and which may cause injury to persons shall be guarded."

ISSUES

1. Whether an unguarded V-belt on the alternator of a truck engine constitutes a violation of the standard in question where the truck operator checks the engine oil with the engine running?

2. If so, whether the condition can be abated by requiring that the engines be turned off before checking the oil, or whether a guard is necessary?

3. If a violation was established, what is the appropriate penalty?

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The U.S. Steel Corporation is subject to the provisions of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, in the operation of the Minntac Plant.

truck is, while the engine is running, a moving machine part. engine oil is checked with the engine running, the V-belt assembly constitutes a pinch point which may be contacted by persons.

DISCUSSION

There is no real dispute that one checking the oil by the on the truck in question while the engine is running is subject the possibility of coming in contact with the pinch point formed by the alternator V-belt and the alternator pulley. U.S. Steel argues that the risk is remote (it compares it to the risk of being struck by a falling meteor); that no other operator has ever been cited for this condition; that no injuries have ever been reported due to the condition; that the citation resulted from the personal campaign of a U.S. Steel employee to have guards installed; that the equipment manufacturer never considered the need for a guard; that the inspector was at fault in requiring the installation of a guard for abatement. ("... inspectors have that right they have succeeded where President Kennedy failed in dictating how the steel companies should run their business." Youngstown Sheet and Tube v. Sawyer, 343 U.S. 579 (1952)). (Br. for United States Steel, p. 7). These arguments are largely beside the point. A risk of injury from the possible contact with moving parts was shown by the evidence.

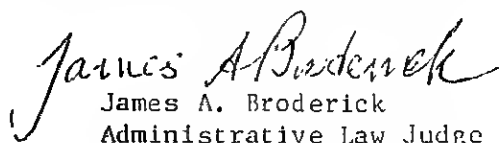
4. There is no risk of injury from contact with moving machine parts in checking the oil with the engine off, since in that condition there are no moving machine parts. Therefore, the condition could properly have been abated by requiring that the engine oil be checked only with the engine turned off. This is the procedure recommended by the equipment manufacturers and the stated policy of U.S. Steel.

5. The probability of an injury occurring in the circumstances shown was slight. On the other hand, if an injury occurred it would be relatively serious. I conclude that the violation was not serious.

6. The company had an official policy of requiring the engine to be turned off when checking the oil. For various reasons, the policy was more honored in the breach than in the observance. This fact should have been known to management personnel. I conclude that U.S. Steel was negligent in permitting the practice to continue.

7. I conclude that an appropriate penalty for the violation is \$75.

IT IS ORDERED that Citation No. 486750 issued July 30, 1981, is AFFIRMED.
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that U.S. Steel Corporation, within 30 days of the date of this decision, pay the sum of \$75 as a civil penalty for the violation of 30 C.F.R. § 55.14-1 charged in the citation.


James A. Broderick
Administrative Law Judge

Distribution: By certified mail

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Louise Q. Symons, Esq., Attorney for United States Steel Corporation, 600 Grant Street, Room 1580, Pittsburgh, PA 15230

Clifford Kasenan, Safety Chairman, Local Union 1938, United Steelworkers of America, 307 First Street North, Virginia, MN 55702

MAY 21 1982

JACK PARKS, : Complaint of Discharge,
Applicant : Discrimination, or Interference
v. :
L & M COAL CORPORATION, : Docket No. NORT 75-377
Respondent :

DECISION

Appearances: Mary Lu Jordan, Esq., United Mine Workers of America,
Washington, D.C., for Applicant;
No appearance for Respondent.

Before: Administrative Law Judge Broderick

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The case is before me on a motion filed by Applicant for a post decision hearing to determine the amount due Applicant as back wages, costs and expenses pursuant to the order in my decision of November 9, 1977. The decision was affirmed by the Commission (2 FMSHRC 2815) and the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit (Unpublished Opinion October 7, 1981 No. 80-1320).

A Notice of Hearing was issued March 30, 1982, scheduling a hearing in Abingdon, Virginia, for April 29, 1982. On March 30, 1982, counsel for Respondent filed a motion to withdraw as counsel because he had been appointed to a Judicial position in Virginia. Counsel stated that he had advised his client of the motion and suggested that he retain other counsel.

On April 2, 1982, I issued an order granting the motion of counsel to withdraw and notifying Respondent of the time and place of the hearing. The notice was sent by certified mail and returned unclaimed April 29, 1982. On April 27, 1982, I called Respondent's former attorney who stated that he sent a copy of the notice of hearing to Respondent when he received it, but had not heard from Respondent. On

asked Mr. Lanningham to call. No call was received. Under the circumstances, I find that Respondent was notified of the hearing. No one appeared on his behalf.

Evidence was received at the hearing and submitted subsequent to the hearing by Complainant on the issues of back pay, interest, legal expenses and costs of litigation. Based on the evidence submitted and on the entire record, I make the following decision on the amounts due Complainant:

BACK PAY

My order directed Respondent to pay Complainant full back wages from the date of discharge (May 9, 1975) to the date he is reinstated with interest thereon computed at the rate of 6 percent per annum. Respondent was permitted to deduct from the back wages due under the order, any wages Complainant received from other employment. Complainant is seeking back pay only for the period from May 9, 1975 to December 5, 1977.

1. Back pay, including vacation pay, holiday pay, unused sick leave pay and cost of living allowances which Complainant would have received for the period in question totals \$37,708.45. Interim earnings total \$7,318.69. The net back pay due Complainant is \$30,389.76.

2. Interest on the net back pay at the rate of 6 percent per annum totals \$10,756.42. My order directed that interest be paid at 6 percent although under the formula followed by the NLRB and by me in more recent decisions, the rate would fluctuate between 6 percent and 20 percent for the periods involved. I am using the rate of 6 percent per annum since my order specified payment of interest at 6 percent.

3. Complainant is entitled to have payments made to the United Mine Workers Health and Retirement Fund on his behalf as part of back wages. The amount that would have been paid for the period involved is \$6,629.12.

LEGAL EXPENSES

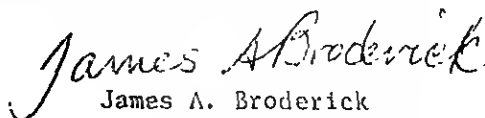
1. At the time the case was tried Complainant was represented by an attorney in private practice who was engaged by the United Mine Workers. When the UMW counsel took over the case directly, the UMW

ORDER

Respondent shall within 30 days of the date of this decision pay the following amounts pursuant to my order of November 9, 1977:

1. To Complainant Jack Parks the sum of \$41,146.18 as back wages and interest.
2. To Complainant Jack Parks and the United Mine Workers of America the sum of \$7,150.23 as attorneys fees and legal expenses.
3. To the United Mine Workers Health and Retirement Fund on behalf of Complainant Jack Parks the sum of \$6,629.12 as employer contributions to the Pension and Benefit Trusts.
4. To Complainant Jack Parks the sum of \$61.97 as incidental expenses of litigation.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that upon payment of the above amounts, Complainant will not be entitled to reinstatement, nor will he have any other claim against Respondent under the Coal Mine Safety Act of 1969 resulting from his discharge on May 9, 1975.


James A. Broderick
Administrative Law Judge

Distribution: By certified mail

Mary Lu Jordan, Esq., United Mine Workers of America, 900 15th Street N.W., Washington, DC 20005

Mr. W. L. Lanningham, Route 4, Box 118, Jonesville, VA 24263

May 21, 1982

UNITED MINE WORKERS	:	NOTICE OF CONTEST
OF AMERICA,	:	
Contestant	:	Docket No. LAKE 82-70-R
	:	
v.	:	Order No. 1226709; 3/15
	:	
SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Saginaw Mine
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	
Respondent	:	

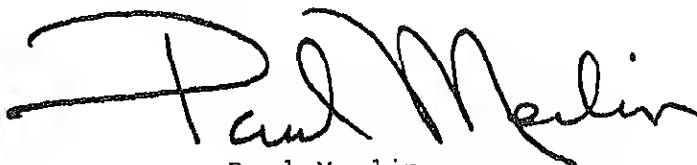
ORDER OF DISMISSAL

On March 15, 1982, an MSHA inspector issued a withdrawal order under section 104(d)(1) of the Act citing a violation of 30 CFR 75.200. On March 16, 1982, the order was terminated. On March 19, 1982, the withdrawal order was vacated on the ground that it had been issued in error.

The Contestant union challenges the vacating of the withdrawal order. I conclude Contestant does not have the right under the Act.

Under section 105(d) of the Act a representative of miners may contest "the issuance, modification, or termination of any order." The Act does not give the representative of miners the right to challenge the vacating of an order. The term "vacating" is used elsewhere in the Act including a subsequent phrase of the same sentence of section 105(d). Congress gave each of the terms "issuance", "modification", "termination" and "vacation" its own separate and discrete meaning and in dealing with these terms Congress has acted with great specificity. If Congress wished the union to have the right to challenge the vacating of an order it would have expressly so provided as it did with respect to other actions that are taken with respect to orders. In view of the precise delineations set forth in 105(d) there is no basis to expand by implication the rights granted therein or to read into it any other part of the Act such

In light of the foregoing, this case is DISMISSED.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Merlin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Paul Merlin
Chief Administrative Law Judge

Distribution: Certified mail.

Thomas M. Myers, Esq., UMWA, 56000 Dilles Bottom, S
OH 43947

John H. O'Donnell, Esq., Office of the Solicitor, U
Department of Labor, 4015 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington
22203

May 21, 1982

UNITED MINE WORKERS	:	NOTICE OF CONTEST
OF AMERICA,	:	
Contestant	:	Docket No. LAKE 82-7
	:	
v.	:	Citation No. 1226715
	:	
SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Saginaw Mine
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	
Respondent	:	

ORDER OF DISMISSAL

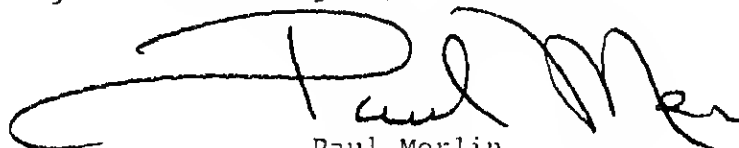
On March 15, 1982, an MSHA inspector issued a citation under section 104(a) of the Act citing a violation of 30.75.303. On March 19, 1982, the citation was vacated.

The Contestant union challenges the vacating of the citation. I conclude that Contestant does not have the right under the Act.

Under section 105(d) a representative of miners only has the right to dispute the "reasonableness of the length of time set for abatement by a citation or modification thereto." An operator may contest the issuance or modification of a citation and the reasonableness of abatement time. No one is given the right to contest the vacating of a citation. Section 105(d) is very specific in delineating the types of actions taken with respect to citations and orders that can be challenged and the identity of those who can assert these challenges. See my decision in United Mine Workers of America v. Secretary of Labor, LAKE 82-71 of this date which is adopted and incorporated herein. It has previously been held that a miner's representative cannot challenge the issuance of a citation. United Mine Workers of America v. Secretary of Labor (CENT 81-223-R) dated August 28, 1981. It also has been held that a miner cannot challenge issuance of a citation. Jenkins v. Secretary of Labor (WEST 81-348-RM) dated September 22, 1981. The

Contestant's reliance upon section 104(h) is
suasive. That section is merely declarative of l
that a citation or order remains in effect until
changed or set aside in the ways specified by tho
rized to do so. It does not enlarge upon the rig
ferred by section 105(d).

In light of the foregoing, this case is DISM

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Merlin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "M".

Paul Merlin
Chief Administrative Law

Distribution:

Thomas M. Myers, Esq., UMWA, 56000 Dilles Bottom,
OH 43947

John H. O'Donnell, Esq., Office of the Solicitor,
Department of Labor, 4015 Wilson Boulevard, Arlin
22203

MAY 24 1982

SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Civil Penalty Proceeding
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	Docket No. WEVA 82-5
Petitioner	:	A.O. No. 46-04160-03014 V
	:	
v.	:	Marilyn No. 1 Mine
	:	
OAK MINING COMPANY,	:	
Respondent	:	

DECISION

Appearances: Aaron Smith, Attorney, U.S. Department of Labor, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the petitioner; Robert V. Berthold, Jr., Esquire, Hoyer, Sergeant & Berthold, Charleston, West Virginia, for the respondent

Before: Judge Koutras

Statement of the Case

This proceeding concerns a proposal for assessment of civil penalty filed by the petitioner against the respondent pursuant to section 110(a) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. 820(a), charging the respondent with three alleged violations of certain mandatory safety standards found in Section 75, Title 30, Code of Federal Regulations.

Respondent filed a timely answer to the proposals, admitted that the mine is subject to the provisions of the Act, and in defense of the violations stated that the conditions cited were abated within a reasonable time, did not constitute an immediate threat to the health and safety of miners, and did not constitute a continued pattern of conduct. Further, respondent submitted that the initial proposed penalty assessment amounts for the violations are inappropriate considering the size of the mine, the size of respondent's company, and the number of previously assessed violations.

By notice of hearing, as subsequently amended, the case was docketed for hearing on April 28, 1982, in Charleston, West Virginia. Prior to the Commencement of the hearing, respondent's counsel of record withdrew the case and also advised that the respondent had filed a Petition for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the United States Bankruptcy Code in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of West Virginia at Charleston, West Virginia.

filed a motion for a stay of the scheduled hearing on the ground that Section 362 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code automatically stays the pending adjudicative proceeding before this Commission. The motion for stay was denied by me on April 9, 1982, and my reasons for the denial are detailed in the order which is a part of the record. The hearing was convened as scheduled and the parties appeared and participated fully therein.

At the request of the parties, an informal prehearing conference was held in Charleston on the evening of April 27, 1982, for the purpose of discussing the issues to be tried, the status of respondent's bankruptcy petition, and a possible settlement of the case. The parties advised me that they had reached a proposed settlement of the case and were afforded an opportunity to present their arguments in support of the settlement on the record at the hearing.

Discussion

Citation No. 904194, issued on June 8, 1981, is a Section 104(d) Order of withdrawal, cites a violation of 30 CFR 75.303, and the condition or practice cited is as follows:

There was no evidence that a preshift examination had been made before miners entered the 002 Section, in that initials, date or time could be found at or near the face areas.

Citation No. 904293, issued on June 19, 1981, is a Section 104(d) Order of Withdrawal cites a violation of 30 CFR 75.400, and the cited condition or practice is as follows:

Loose coal and coal dust, in depths from 1 to 18 inches, was allowed to accumulate on the mine floor and coal ribs in the following entries in the No. 1 (001) section: From the face of No. 1 entry outby 60 feet the face of No. 2 entry outby 50 feet, the face of the No. 3 entry outby 74 feet, the hold of No. 4 entry outby 98 feet, the face of No. 5 entry outby 85 feet and the face of No. 6 entry outby for 59 feet.

Citation No. 904294, issued on June 19, 1981, Section 104(d)(2) Order of Withdrawal, cites a violation of 30 CFR 75.316, and the cited condition or practice is as follows:

Permanent stoppings were not maintained up to and including the third connecting crosscut in the No. 1 (001) section in that permanent stoppings were terminated 4 crosscuts outby the faces of the No. 2 and 3 (intake) faces and No. 4 and 5 (Return) face.

Respondent's bankruptcy petition

As noted in my April 9, 1982, Order denying respondent's motion for stay, Section 362 of the Bankruptcy Code, 11 U.S.C. 362, contains exceptions to the automatic stay provisions of the law, and one of those exceptions reads as follows:

- (b) The filing of a petition under section 301, 302, or 303 of this title does not operate as a stay - * * *
- (4) Under subsections (a)(1) of this section, of the commencement or continuation of an action or proceeding by a governmental unit to enforce such governmental units police or regulatory power; (5) under subsection (a)(2) of this section, of the enforcement of a judgment, other than a money judgment, obtained in an action or proceeding by a governmental unit to enforce such governmental units police or regulatory power;

N.L.R.B. v. Evans Plumbing Company, 639 F.2d 291 (5th Cir. 1981), contains a detailed discussion of the section 362 bankruptcy code stay exception, particularly in cases involving a Federal agency's exercise of regulatory powers, including the enforcement of safety regulations. See also: In re Tauscher, et al., E.D. Wisc. Bankruptcy Court, 24 WH ca 1310, holding that administrative proceedings involving the assessment of civil penalties for child labor violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act are excepted from the automatic stay provisions of section 362 of the Bankruptcy code.

In an April 6, 1982, decision concerning a discrimination complaint filed by the Secretary pursuant to section 105(c) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, MSHA, et al. v. Leon's Coal Company, et al. Docket No. CENT 80-339-D, Judge Melick ruled that enforcement proceedings before this Commission brought by MSHA pursuant to the Act come within the aforementioned statutory exception to the automatic stay provisions of the Bankruptcy Code. Citing several applicable court decisions in addition to those cited above, Judge Melick further held that in spite of the pending bankruptcy proceeding in the case before him, this Commission retained jurisdiction to proceed with hearings in pending cases and to issue decisions and orders.

for a stay of this adjudicative proceeding.
Petitioner's counsel presented full and complete argument in support of the proposed settlement disposition of this case. Information concerning the six criteria found in section 101 of the Act.

Fact of violations

Respondent does not dispute the fact of violations and has no defense to the citations. Under the circumstances the question are AFFIRMED.

Size of business and the effect of the civil penalty assessments on the respondent's ability to remain in business.

The parties agreed that the respondent is a moderately sized coal mine operator that all of the mines owned and operated by the parent company, Coal Management Services Incorporated, produced a total production of 1,088,959 tons of coal, and that the subject mine had an annual production of 272,321 tons.

The parties stipulated that the initial proposed civil assessments for the three citations in question would have a significant impact on the respondent's ability to continue in business in light of the pending bankruptcy proceedings. Although the respondent is not presently in operation, respondent's counsel indicates that the respondent is attempting to resolve its financial affairs and will attempt to restart the mine sometime in the future. Counsel also asserted that the proposed settlement will contribute to the respondent's ability to remain solvent and get back into the coal mining business.

History of prior citations

The parties stipulated that for the 24-month period preceding the issuance of the citations in question the respondent paid civil assessments for a total of 37 violations.

Gravity

Petitioner argued that all the citations were moderate. The failure to conduct the required preshift examination exposed miners to potential hazards. The failure to clear coal accumulations (904293), presented a fire hazard. The failure to maintain the permanent stoppings could have affected the ventilation system.

The parties proposed that a civil penalty assessment for the three citations in question in the total amount of \$1,000 is reasonable and in the public interest, particularly in light of the pending bankruptcy proceedings.

Conclusion

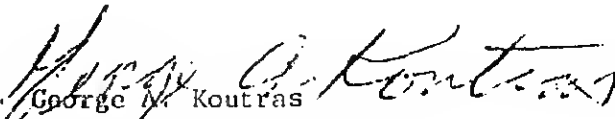
After careful review and consideration of the pleadings, argument and submissions in support of the petitioner's motion to approve the proposed settlement of this case, I conclude and find that the proposed settlement disposition is reasonable and in the public interest. Accordingly, pursuant to 20 C.F.R. § 2700.30, petitioner's motion is GRANTED and the settlement is APPROVED.

The agreed upon penalty assessment of \$1,000 is allocated as follows:

<u>Citation No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>30 CFR Section</u>	<u>Assessment</u>
04194	6/8/81	75.303	\$300
04293	6/19/81	75.400	\$400
04294	6/19/81	75.316	\$300

ORDER

Respondent IS ORDERED to pay civil penalties in the settlement amounts shown above in satisfaction of the citations in question within thirty days of the date of this decision and order, and upon receipt of payment from the petitioner, this proceeding is DISMISSED.


George A. Koutras
Administrative Law Judge

Aaron Smith, Attorney, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Solicitor
3535 Market St., Philadelphia, PA 19104 (Certified Mail)

Robert V. Berthold, Jr., Esq., Hoyer, Sargent & Berthold, 22 Capitol Mall
Charleston, WV 25301 (Certified Mail)

May 26, 1982

QUARTO MINING COMPANY,	:	Contest of Orders
Contestant	:	
	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-118-
v.	:	Order No. 1121181; 3/2/
	:	
SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-119-
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	Order No. 1121182; 3/2/
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	
Respondent	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-120-
	:	Order No. 1121183; 3/2/
	:	
	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-121-
	:	Order No. 1121185; 3/2/
	:	
	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-122-
	:	Order No. 1124038; 3/2/
	:	
	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-123-
	:	Order No. 1124039; 3/2/
	:	
	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-124-
	:	Order No. 1124040; 3/2/
	:	
	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-125-
	:	Order No. 1124041; 3/2/
	:	
SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Civil Penalty Proceeding
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-147
Petitioner	:	A.C. No. 33-01157-03250
	:	
v.	:	Docket No. LAKE 81-148
	:	A.C. No. 33-01157-03251
QUARTO MINING COMPANY,	:	
Respondent	:	Powhatan No. 4 Mine

DECISION

Appearances: John T. Scott, III, Esq., Crowell & Moring,
Washington, DC for Contestant/Respondent,
Quarto Mining Company;
Patrick M. Zohn, Esq., Office of the Solicitor
U.S. Department of Labor, Philadelphia, PA
for Respondent/Petitioner, MSHA.

Before: Judge Merlin

The first eight docket numbers captioned as notices of contest filed by Quarto Mining Company under section 105(d) of the Act to challenge the validity of orders of withdrawal issued by two inspectors of the Mi Safety and Health Administration for alleged violations 30 CFR 75.1003-2. The last two docket numbers are petitions for the assessment of civil penalties filed by the Secretary of Labor under section 110(a) of the Act for violations alleged in the orders.

Prior to the hearing the parties filed preliminary statements, joint stipulations and memoranda of law. The hearing was held as scheduled on May 12, 1982. Documentary exhibits and oral testimony were received from both parties. At the conclusion of the hearing both parties waived the filing of written briefs and agreed I should render a decision based upon the transcript of the hearing and documentary evidence (Tr. 203).

At the outset of the hearing the Solicitor moved to vacate Order 1121182 (LAKE 81-119-R) and to dismiss the civil penalty petition with respect to that item. The operator also moved to dismiss its notice of contest for that order. From the bench I granted the motions (Tr.

During the course of the hearing the Solicitor also moved to vacate Order 1121181 (LAKE 81-118-R) and to dismiss the civil penalty petition with respect to that item. The operator also moved to dismiss its notice of contest for that order. From the bench I granted the motions (Tr. 146).

This left for decision the validity of the remaining six orders and associated penalty items.

The Mandatory Standard

Section 75.1003-2 of the mandatory standards provisions in pertinent part as follows:

§ 75.1003-2 Requirements for movement of off-track mining equipment in areas of active workings where energized trolley wires or trolley feeder wires are present; pre-movement requirements; certified and qualified persons.

§ 75.153 of this part, shall examine the trolley wires, trolley feeder wires, and the associated automatic circuit interrupting devices provided for short circuit protection to ensure that proper short circuit protection exists.

(b) A record shall be kept of the examinations required by paragraph (a) of this section, and shall be made available, upon request, to an authorized representative of the Secretary.

(c) Off-track mining equipment shall be moved or transported in areas of the active workings where energized trolley wires or trolley feeder wires are present only under the direct supervision of a certified person who shall be physically present at all times during moving or transporting operations.

(d) The frames of off-track mining equipment being moved or transported, in accordance with this section, shall be covered on the top and on the trolley wire side with fire-resistant material which has met the applicable requirements of Part 18 of Subchapter D of this Chapter (Bureau of Mines Schedule 2G).

....

(f) A minimum vertical clearance of 12 inches shall be maintained between the farthest projection of the unit of equipment which is being moved and the energized trolley wires or trolley feeder wires at all times during the movement or transportation of such equipment; provided,

orders of withdrawal issued by two inspectors of the Mine Safety and Health Administration for alleged violations of 30 CFR 75.1003-2. The last two docket numbers are petitions for the assessment of civil penalties filed by the Secretary of Labor under section 110(a) of the Act for violations alleged in the orders.

Prior to the hearing the parties filed preliminary statements, joint stipulations and memoranda of law. The hearing was held as scheduled on May 12, 1982. Documentary exhibits and oral testimony were received from both parties. At the conclusion of the hearing both parties waived the filing of written briefs and agreed I should render a decision based upon the transcript of the hearing and documentary evidence (Tr. 203).

At the outset of the hearing the Solicitor moved to vacate Order 1121182 (LAKE 81-119-R) and to dismiss the civil penalty petition with respect to that item. The operator also moved to dismiss its notice of contest for that order. From the bench I granted the motions (Tr. 5).

During the course of the hearing the Solicitor also moved to vacate Order 1121181 (LAKE 81-118-R) and to dismiss the civil penalty petition with respect to that item. The operator also moved to dismiss its notice of contest for that order. From the bench I granted the motions (Tr. 146).

This left for decision the validity of the remaining six orders and associated penalty items.

The Mandatory Standard

Section 75.1003-2 of the mandatory standards provides in pertinent part as follows:

§ 75.1003-2 Requirements for movement of off-track mining equipment in areas of active workings where energized trolley wires or trolley feeder wires are present; pre-movement requirements; certified and qualified persons.

§ 75.153 of this part, shall examine the trolley wires, trolley feeder wires, and the associated automatic circuit interrupting devices provided for short circuit protection to ensure that proper short circuit protection exists.

(b) A record shall be kept of the examinations required by paragraph (a) of this section, and shall be made available, upon request, to an authorized representative of the Secretary.

(c) Off-track mining equipment shall be moved or transported in areas of the active workings where energized trolley wires or trolley feeder wires are present only under the direct supervision of a certified person who shall be physically present at all times during moving or transporting operations.

(d) The frames of off-track mining equipment being moved or transported, in accordance with this section, shall be covered on the top and on the trolley wire side with fire-resistant material which has met the applicable requirements of Part 18 of Subchapter D of this Chapter (Bureau of Mines Schedule 2G).

....

(f) A minimum vertical clearance of 12 inches shall be maintained between the farthest projection of the unit of equipment which is being moved and the energized trolley wires or trolley feeder wires at all times during the movement or transportation of such equipment; provided,

so maintained, the following additional persons shall be taken:

....
(3) At all times the unit of equipment is being moved or transported, a miner shall be stationed at the first automatic circuit breaker outby the equipment being moved and such miner shall be: (i) In direct communication with persons actually engaged in the moving or transporting operation, and (ii) capable of communicating with the responsible person on the surface required to be on duty in accordance with § 75.1600-1 of this part;

....
(5) No person shall be permitted to be inby the unit of equipment being moved or transported, in the ventilating current of air that is passing over such equipment, except those persons directly engaged in moving such equipment.

....

The Cited Conditions or Practices

Order No. 1121183 (LAKE 81-120-R) cites a violation of 30 CFR 75.1003-2(f)(3)(i) for the following condition:

While the conveyor belt tailpiece unit was being transported along the No. 1 main line track entry, a miner was not stationed at the first automatic circuit breaker outby the equipment being moved or in direct communication with persons actually engaged in the transporting operation. The unit contacted the trolley wire on 2-27-81 at about 6:55 p.m. Person in charge was W. McIntire, construction foreman.

Order No. 1121185 (LAKE 81-121-R) cites a violation of 30 CFR 75.1003-2(f)(5) for the following condition:

An inspection revealed that on February 27, 1981, a belt conveyor tailpiece unit (off-track mining equipment) was moved along the No. 1 main line haulage road in violation of the following mandatory standard: The unit of equipment (belt conveyor tailpiece) was not examined by a certified person to ensure that loose coal, coal dust, and float coal dust were cleared up and not permitted to accumulate on such equipment. Accumulations of loose coal, coal dust, and float coal dust were present on the entire surface area of the belt conveyor tailpiece unit in depths of 1/4 to 4 inches. W. McIntire, Recovery Foreman, was the person in charge.

Order No. 1124039 (LAKE 81-123-R) cites a violation of R 75.1003-2(b) for the following condition:

An inspection revealed that on February 27, 1981, a belt conveyor tailpiece unit (off-track mining equipment) was moved along the No. 1 main line haulage road under energized trolley wire in violation of the following mandatory standard: The absence of entries into the record book indicated that a qualified person did not examine the trolley wires, trolley feeder wires, and the associated automatic circuit interrupting devices provided for short circuit protection to ensure that proper short circuit protection existed. W. McIntire, Recovery Foreman, was the person in charge.

An inspection revealed that on February 27, 1981, a belt conveyor tailpiece unit (off-track mining equipment) was moved along the No. 1 main line haulage road under energized trolley wire without the direct supervision of a certified person. The recovery foreman in charge was not physically present during the transporting operation. W. McIntire, Recovery Foreman, was the person in charge.

Order No. 1124041 (LAKE 81-125-R) cites a violation of 30 CFR 75.1003-2(d) for the following condition:

An inspection revealed that on February 27, 1981, a belt conveyor tailpiece unit (off-track mining equipment) was moved along the No. 1 main line haulage road under energized trolley wire in violation of the following mandatory standard: The frame of the belt conveyor tailpiece unit was not covered on the top and trolley wire side with fire-resistant material. The top surface of the unit measured 10 feet, 6 inches in length by 5 feet, 9 inches to 6 feet, 9 inches in width, and only one piece of fire-resistance belt measuring 10 feet, 2 inches in length by 3 feet in width was placed on top of the unit. W. McIntire, Recovery Foreman, was the person in charge.

Stipulations

In the first preliminary statement filed September 1981, the parties agreed to the following stipulations:

1. Quarto Mining Company is the operator of the Powhatan No. 4 Mine.
2. The operator and the Powhatan No. 4 Mine are subject to the jurisdiction of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977.
3. The presiding administrative law judge has jurisdiction over this proceeding.

8. Imposition of any penalty in this proceeding will not affect the operator's ability to continue in business.

On April 8, 1982, the parties submitted an additional 19 stipulations which are as follows:

1. On Monday, February 23, 1981, miners under the supervision of Support Foreman Walter McIntire loaded four on-track supply cars in the 9 and 10 Right 1 North Section of the Powhatan No. 4 Mine of Quarto Mining Company. The four cars were loaded with belt structure, hydraulic oil, brattice cloth, empty oil cans, rags, trash and a belt tailpiece. This belt tailpiece had been modified by putting steel wings on it which increased its width. The wings were added so that when coal was dumped onto the tailpiece it would not overflow. The tailpiece was 10 feet 6 inches in length, 3 feet 1 inch in height and varied in width from 5 feet 9 inches to 6 feet 9 inches.
2. On Friday, February 27, 1981, at approximately 6:00 p.m., Mr. McIntire instructed Dwight Lancaster, general inside laborer, and George Harold, stopper operator, to transport

ran around section 10. The locomotive pulling the cars and Mr. Harold accompanied him. The locomotive usually travels at about five miles per hour.

3. Prior to the move of the tailpiece, it was not examined by a certified person to ensure that coal dust, float coal dust, loose coal, oil, grease and other combustible materials had been cleaned up and not permitted to accumulate on it.
4. Because no examination of the tailpiece took place, no record could be kept and made available to an authorized representative of the Secretary of Labor.
5. No certified person was physically present at all times during the movement of the tailpiece to directly supervise its trip from 9 and 10 Right 1 North to the 3 South Runaround.
6. The entire top of the tailpiece was not covered by fire resistant material, although a piece of rubber matting measuring 5 feet 2 inches in length and 3 feet in width was placed on the right side or trolley wire side of the tailpiece.
7. A minimum vertical clearance of 12 inches between the wings of the tailpiece and the energized trolley wires could not be maintained during the movement of the tailpiece in part due to the physical restrictions of the coal seam.
8. The locomotive pulling the cars was using direct current electric power which was provided by a power source inby. During the move of the tailpiece, no miner was stationed to cut off the power source, no miner was outby in direct communication with Dwight Lancaster and George Harold while they were moving the tailpiece, and no miner was stationed at the first automatic circuit breaker outby the tailpiece at all times during the move.

the Dispatcher and the Main Line Foreman of the incident and left their shift for the day with their section foreman Walter McIntire.

11. After Lancaster and Harold left the mine, members of the Union Safety Committee were contacted. Three members, Pete Polverini, Floyd Lucido, and Gary Anderson, arrived at the mine early in the evening and thereupon examined the tailpiece and the location of the incident.
12. Members of the Union Safety Committee contacted the MSHA Subdistrict Office later that evening and informed it about the incident. Three days later, on Monday, March 2, 1981, Federal Coal Mine Inspectors Franklin Homko and William Allen McGilton were instructed by their Supervisor Louis P. Jones to conduct an inspection of the area where the incident had occurred.
13. After examining the tailpiece and the location of the incident, the inspectors tentatively decided to issue eight orders to Quarto alleging violations of eight paragraphs of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1003-2. The inspectors then held a meeting with Quarto and union officials after their inspection.

requirements which apply only to off-track mining equipment, did not apply to the transport of a tailpiece.

15. The two inspectors took Quarto's view under advisement and contacted by telephone their subdistrict manager in St. Clairsville, Ohio, Mr. George Svilar, to reaffirm their belief that a belt tailpiece was classified as off-track mining equipment. Based on their investigation, interviews, the call to Mr. Svilar, and interpretation of the applicable regulations, the inspectors issued eight § 104(d)(2) orders of withdrawal.
16. Inspector McGilton issued four orders for violations of the following:

<u>Order No.</u>	<u>Paragraph of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1003-2 Allegedly Violated</u>
1124038	75.1003-2(a)(1)
1124039	75.1003-2(b)
1124040	75.1003-2(c)
1124041	75.1003-2(d)

17. Inspector Homko issued four orders for violations of the following:

<u>Order No.</u>	<u>Paragraph of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1003-2 Allegedly Violated</u>
1121181	30 CFR 75.1003-2(f)(1)(ii)
1121182	30 CFR 75.1003-2(f)(2)
1121183	30 CFR 75.1003-2(f)(3)(i)
1121185	30 CFR 75.1003-2(f)(5)

issued for the purpose of setting off the chain in which subject orders were issued (Tr. 97).

I accepted all the stipulations.

Discussion and Analysis

Existence of a Violation

The existence of a violation depends upon whether the tailpiece was off-track equipment. In accordance with the factual stipulations, the parties agree that if the tailpiece is off-track equipment, the conduct of the operator violates the Act (Tr. 6).

"Off-track" is not defined in the Act or regulations. Neither is "on-track." However, on-track has a well accepted meaning. On-track is equipment which moves on rails or tracks either under its own power like a locomotive or as the case of a mine car under the power of another vehicle which it is attached (Tr. 150).

I believe the determination of what is off-track must be reached by placing that term in juxtaposition to on-track. The key to both terms is mobility, how something moves. On-track refers to a certain type of movement by machines, i.e., on rails (Tr. 150). Off-track refers to another kind of movement by machinery, i.e., not on rails, as for instance on wheels like a shuttle car. As operator safety director recognized at the hearing, off-track equipment

The tailpiece in question was mounted on skids (Tr. 187). It could be moved about and indeed was intended to be moved about the section without damage to the mine floor by being attached to a shuttle car which had power (Tr. 187, 189). It is therefore mobile like the fan which the operator's safety director admitted is off-track. The operator's safety director admitted that the mobility of the fan and the tailpiece were the same (Tr. 188-190). In light of the foregoing, I conclude the tailpiece is off-track equipment within the meaning of the mandatory standard.

Both parties purport to rely upon the decision in Southern Ohio Coal Company v. Secretary of Labor, 3 FMSHRC 1449 (1981), which holds that this mandatory standard only applies to "complete or reasonably complete pieces of off-track mining equipment" and does not apply to "component parts of off-track mining equipment." However, neither party seems certain what that decision means. So many things can be characterized as components of a larger entity and no one offered a basis for me to distinguish between a component and something that is reasonably complete. Therefore, I cannot apply that decision here.

Insofar as the mandatory standard covers a "unit" of off-track equipment, I conclude this tailpiece is included. It is a single or distinct part used for a specific purpose. Webster's New World Dictionary (2nd College Edition 1972).

The argument that the term off-track is too vague also must be rejected. As set forth above, the terms off-track and on-track relate to specific aspects of mine machinery and are susceptible of precise delineation. To be sure, it would have been better had the Secretary taken appropriate action to define the parameters of these terms. However, his failure to do so does not mean they are too vague to be properly defined and enforced in this proceeding. The situation here is far different from one where a wholly subjective description such as "excessive" is employed as the sole standard. Secretary of Labor v. Quarto Mining Company, 2 FMSHRC 2669 (1980), appeal dismissed, 3 FMSHRC 2051 (1981).

The governing definition of unwarrantable failure still to be found in Zeigler Coal Company, 7 IBMA 280 (1977) decided under the 1969 Act which held in pertinent part as follows at 295-296:

In light of the foregoing, we hold that an inspector should find that a violation of any mandatory standard was caused by an unwarrantable failure to comply with such standard if he determines that the operator involved has failed to abate the conditions or practices constituting such violation, conditions or practices the operator knew or should have known existed or which it failed to abate because of a lack of due diligence, or because of indifference or lack of reasonable care.

Zeigler was specifically approved during consideration of the 1977 Act. S.Rep. 95-181, 95th Cong., 1st Sess., 31-32 (1977), reprinted in Senate Subcommittee on Labor Committee on Human Resources, 95th Cong., 2nd Sess., Legislative History of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, at 619-620 (1978).

In this case it is clear that the operator knew of conditions or practices which comprised its failure to comply with the mandatory standard. The evidence makes clear that the operator's recovery foreman was in charge moving the tailpiece and either knew or should have known all the circumstances surrounding the move.

This is not however, the end of the matter. Under circumstances presented here further inquiry must be made with respect to whether the operator knew or should have known that the conditions or practices constituted a violation. I recognize that after pointing out that the legislative history of the 1969 Act was not clear on the point, Zeigler concluded that unwarrantability did not depend upon knowledgeability of the operator with regard to a matter of fact, i.e., whether it had committed a violation. But Zeigler is an accumulations case under 30 CFR 75.400. It did not

operator for the purpose of recording moves of off-track equipment and never had the operator been cited for failure to apply 30 CFR 75.1003-2 to tailpieces (Tr. 125-126). The MSHA inspector thought the operator's belief that the tailpiece was not off-track was reasonable, although erroneous (Tr. 135-138).

Finding unwarrantable failure and therefore imposing upon the operator the harsh sanctions flowing from mine closure and high penalty assessment is offensive to fundamental fairness where, as here, the Secretary for years has done nothing to interpret the regulatory language or to advise the operator what is expected of it. As previously stated, the Secretary's failure to act does not prevent interpretation and application of the mandatory standard in this case. However, it is quite another matter to hold the operator guilty of unwarrantable failure and subject it to attendant severe punishments in such a situation. This the Act should not be interpreted to require. I conclude therefore, the operator is not guilty of unwarrantable failure in this case.

Modification of Orders to Citations

In light of the foregoing, the subject 104(d)(2) withdrawal orders cannot stand as withdrawal orders under that section because there was no unwarrantable failure. Pursuant to section 105(d) of the Act, I hereby modify these orders to 104(a) citations. Under section 105(d) the Commission and its Judges have authority after a hearing to affirm, modify or vacate an order. I recognize that Board decisions under the 1969 Act denied administrative law judges the power to modify. See e.g., Freeman Coal Mining Corp., 2 IBMA 197, 209-210 (1973), aff'd sub nom. on other grounds, Freeman Coal Mining Co. v. IBMA, 504 F.2d 741 (7th Cir. 1974). However, another approach seems to be emerging under the 1977 Act. See the Commission's decision in Old Ben Coal Company, 2 FMSHRC 1187 (1980). Administrative law judges have modified orders under the 1977 Act. Consolidation Coal Company, 3 FMSHRC 2207 (1981); Youngstown Mines Corporation, 3 FMSHRC 1793 (1981). In this case neither party would be prejudiced by modification of the orders to citations. Both parties have had full notice and opportunity to argue every conceivable issue and they have done so.

matter. It would avoid wasting time and money by requiring the Secretary to engage in the pro forma tasks of issuing new citations and filing new petitions for assessment of civil penalties.

In light of the foregoing, the subject withdrawal orders are modified to 104(a) citations.

Issuance of Multiple Orders

Section 110(a) of the Act provides "Each occurrence of a violation of a mandatory health or safety standard may constitute a separate offense." The operator argues that there was only one occurrence--moving the tailpiece, and that therefore only one order should have been issued. The operator also relies upon an MSHA policy memorandum dated October 3, 1979, which provides that:

[W]here there are multiple violations of the same standard which are observed in the course of an inspection and which are all related to the same piece of equipment or to the same area of the mine, such multiple violations should be treated as one violation and one citation should be issued.

I cannot accept the operator's position. In allowing separate citations, section 110(a) refers to the occurrence of a "violation" not the occurrence of an event which may be composed of multiple incidents or happenings, each with its own identity and each of which may independently violate the Act for a different reason. In this case moving the tailpiece involved several incidents such as miners in by the equipment, failure to examine the equipment, lack of supervision by a certified person, absence of fire resistant

on a haulageway, make clear that the memorandum is directed at the same thing happening more than once in the same area or with respect to the same piece of equipment. Here different things happened and each of them violated a different sub-section of the mandatory standard for a different reason.

Accordingly, multiple violations properly were found and separate orders, now modified to citations, were properly issued for each of them. As set forth infra, the fact that the violations arose out of the same event may be taken into account in determining the appropriate amount of civil penalties to be assessed.

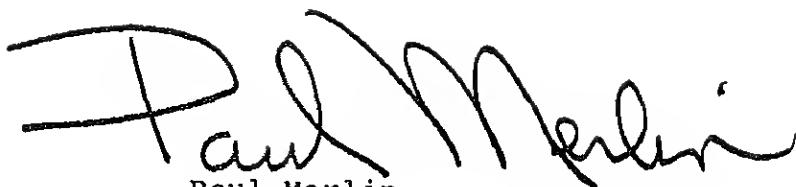
The Amount of Civil Penalties

Section 110(i) of the Act sets forth the factors which must be considered in assessing civil penalties.

In accordance with the stipulations, I find the operator is large in size, imposition of penalties will not affect its ability to continue in business, and its history of prior violations is rather significant. As agreed at the hearing, I further find abatement was within a reasonable time and in good faith (Tr. 29-30).

As shown by the testimony, the violations posed hazards such as smoke inhalation. I conclude they were moderately serious.

As set forth above, I do not believe the operator was guilty of unwarrantable failure. However, since the recovery foreman was on the scene and in charge of the move, the operator must be held to have been negligent. In addition, I believe the fact that all violations were committed in moving the tailpiece should be borne in mind in assessing the degree of negligence and gravity. This situation is somewhat different than where the operator commits several wholly unrelated serious violations and is negligent in situations which have nothing to do with each other.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Merlin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P" and "M".

Paul Merlin

Chief Administrative Law Judge

Distribution: Certified mail.

John T. Scott, III, Esq., Crowell & Moring, 1100 Connecticut
Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20036

Patrick M. Zohn, Esq., Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department
of Labor, 881 Federal Building, 1240 East Ninth Street,
Cleveland, OH 44199

MAY 26 1981

SECRETARY OF LABOR, : Civil Penalty Proceeding
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH :
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA), : Docket No. WEVA 81-11
Petitioner : A.C. No. 46-05653-03004
v. :
CLAY KITTANNING COAL CO., INC., : Gail Mine
Respondent :

DECISION

Appearances: David E. Street, Esq., Office of the Solicitor, U.S.
Department of Labor, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for
Petitioner;
William Ray, Summersville, West Virginia, for Respondent

Before: Judge Melick

This case is before me upon a petition for assessment of civil penalties under section 110(a) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1969, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et seq., the "Act," in which the Secretary has proposed penalties of \$2,000 against the Clay Kittanning Coal Co., Inc., (Clay Kittanning) for four violations of mandatory standards. Clay Kittanning does not deny the violations, but maintains that an independent contractor was solely responsible for those violations and that therefore it is not liable for any civil penalties under the Act. Accordingly, the legal issue in this case is whether Clay Kittanning is responsible in any way for the admitted violations set forth in the petition for assessment of civil penalty and, if so, what are the appropriate civil penalties to be assessed for those violations. Evidentiary hearings were held in this case at Charleston, West Virginia.

Liability of Mine Owner

Clay Kittanning is admittedly the owner of the Gail Mine at the time the orders and citation at bar were issued. William Ray, President and General Manager for Clay Kittanning insists, however, that the company was not responsible for the cited violations because, at the time of the violations, the Gail Mine was being operated by an independent contractor, Williams, who was doing business as the Palma Coal Company.

terior, 547 F.2d 240 (4th Cir. 1977). The Secretary's decision to proceed against an owner for such violations is, however, subject to review for permissible motives. Secretary v. Phillips Uranium Corporation, 4 FMSH (April 27, 1982). Administrative efficiency or convenience is apparently an impermissible motive regardless of the results achieved by the Secretary's action. Phillips Uranium, supra. Since the Phillips decision was rendered subsequent to the hearings in this case specific inquiry was made at those hearings into the Secretary's initial motivation for proceeding against the mine owner herein. Evidence exists, however, from which the Secretary's motives may be inferred.

At the time of the inspection here at issue, February 7, 1980, the Secretary was following an interim policy of proceeding only against owner/operators for violations of the Act. Phillips Uranium, supra. Subsequently, on July 1, 1980, the Secretary published his final rules establishing guidelines for holding independent contractors as well as owners responsible for the safety and health requirements of the law. 45 Fed. Reg. 44494. Even assuming, arguendo, that the Secretary's motives were impermissible when citations and orders at bar were issued under his interim policy, it is apparent in this case that the Secretary later sought to correct any such deficiencies by attempting to apply his new guidelines.

In an obvious good faith effort to apply those guidelines to the case at bar the Secretary sought through formal discovery procedures under Commission Rules 55 and 57, 29 C.F.R. §§ 2700.55 and 2700.57 to ascertain the proper party or entities against whom enforcement action should be pursued. Accordingly, on March 27, 1981, the Secretary served upon Clay Kittanning a request for production of "any or all contracts between the owner/Respondent Clay Kittanning Coal Co., Inc., and William White concerning the function, duties and responsibilities of William White at the Gail Mine prior to February 27, 1980," and served written interrogatories relating to the responsibilities for operation of the Gail Mine. Clay Kittanning did not respond to either discovery request and the Secretary thereafter on June 18, 1981, filed a motion for sanctions against Clay Kittanning for this failure to reply.

In response to that motion, the undersigned issued an order to Clay Kittanning to show cause providing in part as follows:

* * * Respondent, Clay Kittanning Coal Company, Inc., is ordered to answer the said interrogatories and to produce the documents requested by Petitioner within 15 days or show good reason for not doing so. Otherwise, the undersigned will take appropriate sanctions. Such sanctions may include issuing an

Respondent failed to reply to the show cause order and on August 6, 1981, the undersigned issued pursuant to Federal Rule 37(b)(2)(A), an Order That Facts Be Taken As Established. That Order provided that the following facts be taken as established: (1) that Respondent is the operator of the Gail Mine, within the meaning of section 3(d) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, and (2) that Respondent is the party solely responsible for the conditions and equipment cited for violations of the Act and regulations in the above captioned proceeding." 1/

Under the circumstances it is clear that the Secretary had acted reasonably and prudently in his efforts to ascertain the responsible party or parties but was thwarted in these efforts by the failure of the mine owner to comply with lawful discovery requests and orders of the Administrative Law Judge. 2/ Clearly there was no abuse of the Secretary's discretion here. This case is accordingly distinguishable from Phillips Uranium. Since Clay Kittanning does not deny the existence of any of the violations the sole issue remaining for determination is the amount of civil penalty for which Clay Kittanning is responsible.

1/ Inasmuch as Mr. Ray contended at subsequent hearings that the Secretary already knew the answers to the questions asked in the interrogatories, that it was therefore unfair to bar him from presenting evidence at hearing on the question of the proper entity or entities to be held responsible for the violations I allowed evidence at hearing concerning that issue. The evidence did not demonstrate, however, that the Secretary had sufficient information before initiating discovery from which he could have determined these issues with any degree of certainty. Accordingly, the "Order That Facts Be Taken As Established" issued August 6, 1981, is dispositive of the issue of liability for the violations. It is also noted that although ample opportunity to do so, Mr. Ray never did provide complete information concerning the relationship between employees, officials and shareholders of Clay Kittanning and the employees and owners of Palma Coal Company, the purported independent contractor. It was disclosed at hearing, however, that the mine superintendent and certified electrician for the independent contractor was also an official of the corporate mine owner.

2/ It was also disclosed at hearing that the owner's relationship with the independent contractor herein was terminated shortly after the citation orders at bar were issued and that Mr. Ray did not then know where the contractor could be located.

Moreover, the uncontradicted testimony of MSHA Inspector Willis is that one of the power conductors had been damaged and the damaged portion of cable had touched a metal part of the machine, the machine frame would be energized thereby subjecting the machine operator to electrical shock. The hazard was amplified by the existence of water and wet conditions on the floor. Under the circumstances, I find that a serious hazard from electrical shock in fact existed as cited and was "significant and substantial." Secretary v. Cement Division, National Gypsum Company, 3 FMSHRC 822 (1978).

I further find that Clay Kittanning was grossly negligent in permitting the condition to exist. The fact that the frame ground had been doubled back and taped to the cable, requiring some affirmative act, is clear evidence of an intentional violation. Moreover, it is uncontradicted that an entry inspection hook for the cited machine, on January 30, 1980, some 8 months prior to the discovery of the condition by Inspector Willis, showed that as of that date, it had not been frame grounded. The violation hereinafter abated timely.

Order No. 650421 also alleges a violation of the standard at 30 CFR § 75.703 and reads as follows:

The cutting machine was not provided with a frame ground in that the frame ground was doubled back and taped to the cable and was not connected to the return feeder line of the 250 volt direct current power system. This condition was listed in the book for the examination of electric face equipment at this mine and was dated and initialed by Ed McClure, superintendent and certified electrician at this mine. The cutting machine was located in No. 3 entry. The mine floor in this entry was wet and water was 0 to 4 inches deep.

The existence of the cited condition is not disputed nor is the testimony of Inspector Willis that the negligence and the extent of the hazard was

A suitable circuit breaker or other device approved by the Secretary was not provided for the trailing cables applying power 250 volts direct current to the roof bolting and cutting machines at this mine. The cables were connected directly to the 500 MCM DC feeder lines.

According to the undisputed testimony of Inspector Willis, the trailing cable was not protected its entire length. Willis found that insulation was removed from the trailing cable and the cable was clamped directly to the 500 MCM feeder line without intervening fuses or a circuit breaker. Willis pointed out that in the absence of short circuit protection for the trailing cable, there was indeed a hazard of fire or, if the insulation melted, exposure of the cable, of shock or electrocution. Willis observed that the miner did not have on the premises sufficient equipment to correct these conditions. Superintendent McClure, who was also the only certified electrician at the mine, acknowledged the deficiencies and admitted that he did not have a fuse, circuit breaker, or other overload device available at the mine to correct the deficiencies.

Under the circumstances, I find that the cited condition was a hazard to the miners and, because it required an affirmative act to correct, it was the result of gross negligence. The violation was accordingly significant and substantial." One of the cited conditions was corrected the following day when a 125 amp dual element fuse was furnished for the roof bolting machine. A 90 amp dual element fuse was not provided for the roof bolting machine until later and the violation relating thereto was not abated until February 14, 1980.

Order No. 650428 alleges a violation of the standard at 30 C.F.R. § 77.701 and reads as follows:

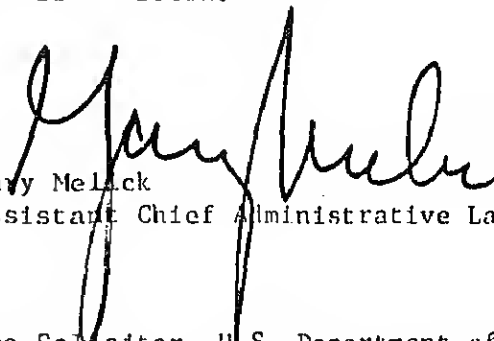
The metal frame of the battery charger located near Entry No. 1 on the surface was not frame grounded in that the grounding conductor was connected to the grounding medium.

The order was subsequently modified to read as follows: "Order No. 6540428 is modified to state that the grounding conductor was connected to the grounding medium for the 240 volt system." The undisputed testimony of Inspector Willis is that such a condition would not be a shock hazard if the battery charger were to develop a short circuit and energize the frame of the battery charger. The cables leading into the battery charger were located only a foot off the ground in an area common

In determining the amount of penalty, I have also considered that the mine owner was small in size and had no history of violations. Under the circumstances I find that the following penalties are appropriate: Citation 650520-\$600; Order No. 650421-\$600; Order No. 650426-\$600 Order No. 650428-\$600.

ORDER

Clay Kittanning Coal Company, Incorporated is ordered to pay penalty of \$2,400 within 30 days of the date of this decision.



Gary Mellick
Assistant Chief Administrative Law Judge

Distribution:

David E. Street, Esq., Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of Justice
14480 Gateway Building, 3535 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
(Certified Mail)

Mr. William Ray, President, Clay Kittanning Coal Company, Inc.,
P.O. Box 296, Summersville, WV 26651 (Certified Mail)

SECRETARY OF LABOR, MINE SAFETY AND)	CIVIL PENALTY PROCEEDING
HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),)	
Petitioner,)	DOCKET NO. LAKE 81-1
)	
v.)	A/C No. 21-00282-050
)	
UNITED STATES STEEL CORPORATION,)	MINE: Minntac
Respondent.)	

UNITED STATES STEEL CORPORATION,)	CONTEST OF CITATION
Contestant,)	
)	DOCKET NO. LAKE 81-7
v.)	
)	Citation No. 293731
SECRETARY OF LABOR, MINE SAFETY AND)	Issued December 29,
HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),)	
Respondent.)	MINE: Minntac

DECISION

APPEARANCES:

Peter D. Broitman, Esq., and Janet M. Graney, Esq.
Office of the Solicitor
United States Department of Labor
230 S. Dearborn Street, Eighth Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60604
For the Petitioner

Louise Q. Symons, Esq.
United States Steel Corporation
600 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15230
For the Respondent

Before: Judge Virgil E. Vasil

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The above two cases, which were consolidated for hearing, alleged violation of section 110(s) of the Federal Mine Safety

STIPULATION

The parties stipulated to the following:

1. The Administrative Law Judge has jurisdiction in this matter.
2. The inspector who issued Citation No. 293731 is and was a duly authorized representative of the Secretary.
3. U.S. Steel is a large operator within the meaning of 39 C.F.R. § 100.3(b)(2)(ii).
4. Minntac, is a large mine within the meaning of 30 C.F.R. § 100.3(b)(1)(ii).

1/ Section 110(a) of the Act provides as follows:

The operator of a coal or other mine in which a violation occurs a mandatory health or safety standard or who violates any other provision of this Act, shall be assessed a civil penalty by the Secretary which penalty shall not be more than \$10,000 for each such violation. Each occurrence of a violation of a mandatory health or safety standard may constitute a separate offense.

2/ 30 C.F.R. 55.12-14 states in pertinent parts as follows:

... When such energized cables are moved manually, insulated hook tongs, rope, or slings shall be used unless suitable protection for personnel is provided by other means

7. Exhibit B is a true and correct copy of a safety memorandum prepared by U.S. Steel for dissemination to its employees on or about December 18, 1980.

8. The following employees manually moved the cable identified in Citation No. 293731 on December 29, 1980 without the use of protective hooks, tongs, ropes, slings, or other personal protective equipment: Eugene Varani, Mary Ellen Jaskela, Michele Heinzer, Richard Paine, Terrance Stachovich.

ISSUES

Whether respondent violated 30 C.F.R. § 55.12-14, and, if so, the appropriate amount of the civil penalty which should be assessed for such violation pursuant to section 110(a) of the Act?

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Minntac is a large taconite mine utilizing approximately fourty drills and twenty-eight shovels in its operation. Each piece of equipment is electrically powered through a trailing cable which varies in length and averages from four to five thousand feet and sometimes reaches nine thousand feet.

2. The type of trailing cable primarily used at Minntac is U.S. Steel Tiger brand rated at 8kV (8000 volts) with a weight of approximately thirty pounds per foot. It is a shielded type cable incorporating three copper phase conductors each wrapped with an insulating material and encased in a braided wire mesh which in turn is in physical contact with two ground wires. There is also a separate insulated ground wire in the system that can be used as a continuous ground monitor. Minntac does not have a continuous ground monitor system in use. 3/

3. The trailing cables attached to the various pieces of equipment run to either a substation or a meter house. The substation is a building on a platform containing a transformer and various electrical switching and metering devices capable of serving four pieces of equipment used in the mining process. In those situations where the substation does not contain OCB's (oil circuit breakers) a meter house is used to feed the electric current to the equipment.

3/ Joint Exhibit C.

current goes to the ground wire in the cable and is carried back to the meter house or substation where it trips a circuit breaker. A phase-to-ground fault will trip the circuit breaker in the meter house in one-hundredths (.01) of a second. A second back up ground-fault tripping device located usually in the substation is set to trip in three seconds. The ground-fault system is designed to trip the circuit breakers whenever there is a leakage of 5 amps or more of current.

5. Respondent utilizes four procedures for testing trailing cables, particularly when reconnecting a trailing cable to the piece of equipment which is intended to power. After one end of the trailing cable is attached to the piece of equipment it is to power and the other end to the meter house or self-contained substation, the electrician, using a special testing transformer, will perform a high voltage test by placing more than twice the voltage on the three copper phase wires than is used in normal operations. A high current test will show if there is a fault in the cable; it will likely burn at that location. A third test, termed a continuity test, is to determine if the ground wire from the piece of equipment to the meter house is intact. The fourth test is a ground tripping test to determine that the ground-fault tripping system is working properly. 4/

6. Respondent's employees at Minntac are assigned the task of moving trailing cables manually and in the past have done so without using protective gloves.

7. There are no recorded instances of anyone receiving an electrically caused injury from handling trailing cables at respondent's Minntac Mine since the mine started in 1967.

8. On December 18, 1980, a general safety contact was issued by respondent to its employees which stated as follows:

General Safety Contact (L.C. #18)MSHA Regulation 55.12-14

A recent interpretation of this regulation requires that insulated hooks, tongs, ropes, slings, or proper gloves be used to handle live 4160 volts or 440 volt trailing cables (shovels, drills, pumps, etc.). As rapidly as possible, we are providing this equipment for use in handling such cables.

plied with. M. Van Deline, Superintendent - Taconite Mining.
(Emphasis is that of U.S. Steel). 5/

9. On December 29, 1980, a cable crew consisting of five of respondent's employees manually moved a trailing cable energized to potential of 4160 volts without using hooks, tongs, ropes, slings, electricians gloves that had been supplied them by their employer.

10. The respondent's ground-fault system is set to trip out or disconnect at a level of five amps or more. Exposure of miners to c with amps in excess of five milliamps has a potential for injury. M exposure to amps between 5 milliamps and the 5 amps required to trip ground-fault system has the potential of causing serious injury or d

DISCUSSION

Minntac Mine is a large taconite mine utilizing approximately f drills and twenty-eight shovels in its mining process. These machin powered electrically through power cables which are also referred to trailing cables. As a result of an inspection of Minntac Mine on De 29, 1980, Citation No. 293731 was issued charging a violation of man safety standard 30 C.F.R. § 55.12-14 which provides as follows:

Power cables energized to potentials in excess of 150 vol phase-to-ground, shall not be moved with equipment unless sleds or slings, insulated from such equipment, are used. When such energized cables are moved manually, insulated hooks, tongs, ropes, or slings shall be used unless suitable protection for persons is provided by other means. This does not prohibit pulling or dragging of cable by the equipment it powers when the cable is physically attached to the equipment by suitable mechanical devices, and the cable is insulated from the equip- ment in conformance with other standards in this part.

At the commencement of the hearing in this case, the parties stipulated that five of respondent's employees manually moved a trai cable which was energized to a potential in excess of 150 volts, pha ground, without using insulated hooks, tongs, ropes, slings, or othe personal equipment such as protective gloves which had been furnishe employees for such use (Tr. Vol. 1, p. 13).

they argued that their ground-fault system constituted suitable protection for employees by other means. These two companies are involved in an operation similar to the respondent's mining operation, but did not utilize an identical ground-fault system and testing procedures as that used by this respondent. The petitions for modification were denied. Based upon testimony he heard at the hearing and the decision in the Pickards Mather case, MSHA inspector James Begley contacted respondent's management in September 1980 advising them that he intended to start issuing citations if he saw miners moving cable without wearing proper gloves (Tr. Vol. , p.). As indicated in the respondent's safety contact, gloves were to be provided for the employees, but as stated in the last paragraph, respondent did not feel there was a safety hazard with the present method of handling cable (Exhibit B, supra).

The issue in this case is not whether electricians gloves constitute proper suitable protection as provided in § 55.12-14 for the gloves furnished by respondent were not being used by the miners when the citations were issued. The sole issue here is whether respondent's ground-fault system and the testing procedures constitute other means of suitable protection for persons handling energized cable within the meaning of § 55.12-14. 6/

Respondent contends that the trailing cable used at its Minntac Mine provides a ground-fault system that provides suitable protection for persons as required in § 55.12-14. They point out that the cable is rated for 8000 volts whereas the cable usually only carries 4160 volt and that each of the three copper phase wires enclosed in the cable is surrounded by insulating material with a dielectric strength of 8000 volts surrounded by a braided wire mesh in physical contact with two ground wires. Respondent argues that if a fault occurs in this cable, or the equipment served by it

Respondent's Brief, page 5.

cables, a potential for serious injury or death. Minntac cables are present at all times. Phillip Medure, who is an electrician respondent, testified that the trailing cables at Minntac can be for periods of time up to nine years and are exposed to various operating conditions including extreme hot and cold temperatures, snow, and various types of physical abuse including dragging over rocks, snow, lying in snow and water and being run over by equipment. It is a frequent occurrence. Medure stated that when the cable is damaged, it is usually spliced in the field with either a pigtail or what is termed a 3M splice (Tr. Vol. 1, pages 57 to 64). It is clear that the trailing cables can be damaged accidentally by cuts, slices and nicks in the rubber type material that encases the wires and ground wires.

Respondent contends that should the trailing cable be damaged enough to cause a leak of current, the ground-fault system would trip the circuit breaker to trip cutting off the current. However, the argument is based on the fact that the ground wire is intact. The amount of amps to the circuit breaker is at least 5 amps for the circuit breaker is set to trip at that level or above.

I find that the most credible evidence shows that persons are exposed to amperes above five milliamperes or five one thousands of an ampere in injury or death (Vol. 1, page 119). William Helfrich, an engineer experienced in electrical systems in mining testified that the ground-fault system incorporated in respondent's trailing cables is designed to protect the equipment rather than persons handling the cables. I find this evidence along with statements of other witnesses to be convincing on this point. James McNamara, respondent's field foreman at Minntac testified that it was possible for damage to the trailing cables due to the adverse conditions to which they are exposed and that a person coming in contact with this type of damaged cable could be injured (Vol. 2, pages 27 and 28). Frank Erjavec, respondent's Foreman for pit electrical operations, testified that if the cable is intact, a person touching the shield in the cable would not be injured.


Respondent's employee Medura testified that he has experienced situations where splices in the cable have pulled apart and the machine continues to run and the circuit breaker failed to trip out. Also, during the testing procedure while reconnecting a cable, he found the ground wire was not properly connected and the meter showed continuity in the wire (Vol. I, pages 62 through 68). Mary Jaskela, a drill laborer, testified that her duties included moving trailing cable and drills. On one occasion, after a cable had been reconnected and tested by the electrician, she was told that it was all right to move the cable. While she was standing near the cable, felt a hot flash on her leg which was caused by a small hole in the cable (Tr. Vol. I, pages 100 to 102). These experiences by miners in handling and working around trailing cables contradicts the respondent's argument that the ground-fault shielded and testing system is adequate personnel procedure. Although the history for electrical injury in handling trailing cables is remarkable, I find that the most credible evidence supports petitioner's contention that the potential for serious injury or death always exists unless some further precautions are taken. The same conclusion was reached in a recent decision of the Secretary of Labor, MSHA v. United States Steel Corporation, Docket No. WEST 80-58-M (April 1982) wherein the Judge affirmed a similar violation of § 55.12-14 stating in part as follows:

... that when the energized power cables are moved manually the ground fault system is not suitable protection from the electrical hazards provided by means other than insulated hooks, tongs, ropes, or slings as called for in the cited regulation.

In view of the foregoing, and after careful consideration of all the facts, I find that there is substantial evidence to support a finding that the respondent violated 30 C.F.R. § 55.12-14.

ORDER

Citation No. 293731 is affirmed. The Notice of Contest in Docket No. LAKE 81-77-R is dismissed. Respondent is ordered to pay a civil penalty of the sum of \$345.00 within 30 days of the date of this decision.


Virgil E. Vail
Administrative Law Judge

962

v.
ITMANN COAL COMPANY,

Respondent

Complainant :
: Docket No. WEVA 80-73-D
:
: Itmann No. 3A Mine
:

DECISION

Appearances: F. Alfred Sines, Jr., Esq., for Complainant;
Jerry F. Palmer, Esq., for Respondent.

Before: Judge William Fauver

This proceeding was brought by Roger D. Anderson under section 10 of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. § 891 et seq an alleged discriminatory discharge. The case was heard in Charleston West Virginia. Both parties were represented by counsel, who have submitted their proposed findings, conclusions, and briefs.

Having considered the contentions of the parties and the record as a whole, I find that the preponderance of the reliable, probative, and substantial evidence establishes the following:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. At all pertinent times, Respondent, Itmann Coal Company, operates a coal mine known as the Itmann No. 3A Mine in Itmann, West Virginia, which produced coal for sales in or substantially affecting interstate commerce. The Complainant, Roger D. Anderson, was employed by Respondent as a section foreman on the evening shift at the Itmann No. 3A Mine.

2. Complainant began his employment with the Consolidation Coal Company on February 24, 1970, as a coal sampler at the Rowland Coal Preparation Plant. On November 18, 1972, he was promoted to environmental technician and on August 1, 1973, to safety coordinator. On January 1, 1974, he was promoted to safety inspector and on December 1, 1974, to section foreman. On March 1, 1975, he received another promotion to safety inspector and a transfer to Itmann Operations. On February 1, 1977, he became an assistant accident investigator. On July 1, 1978, he was promoted to section foreman at the Itmann No. 3A mine, which position he held at the time of his discharge on July 1, 1979.

6. As section foreman, for about 15 months, Complainant acted as immediate supervisor, Roger Lamastus, lead foreman on the

7. Complainant attended various training classes and at Itmann Coal Company and scored 88 percent or better on various tests given by Respondent. Complainant attended a managerial grid school in Dallas, Texas. This school was sponsored by Respondent and paid for Complainant for one week. Complainant attended a school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, sponsored by the Respondent. All of his expenses were paid. Complainant also attended the school sponsored by the Consolidation Coal Company. All courses, schools attended by Complainant were completed without missing or failing any exams.

8. As section foreman, Complainant regularly worked on the other weekend he also worked either on Saturday or Sunday.

9. Weekend duties normally involved preparing the mine for the next coal producing shift. Usually on Thursday, the Respondent would assign men to report for duty the upcoming weekend. Complainant's assistant, Larry Kiser, were in charge of assigning weekend duties seeing that they were carried out. Roger Lamastus and his assistant acted as lead foreman on weekends.

10. On Thursday, July 26, 1979, Roger Lamastus, eventing section foreman (4:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight shift), instructed Mickey Sizemore, Complainant to report for weekend duty on the Sunday shift, (4:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight). Roger Lamastus had scheduled several men to report for the Saturday shift (4:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight) for the mine move.

11. On Sunday, Mickey Sizemore and Complainant reported to work about 3:10 p.m. About 3:30, Complainant picked up the mine

ment move. He stressed the importance of doing it correctly so coal
be produced on the upcoming midnight shift.

Shortly after 4:00 p.m., while Complainant was sitting in his
Roger Lamastus stepped from the mine office door opening, looked at
watch, looked at Complainant, and shouted a curt order to Com
to get underground. Complainant went underground as directed.

13. About 7:30 that evening, Foreman Sizemore was notified by
dispatcher that James Bowman, MSHA inspector, wanted Sizemore and Co
to come outside the mine.

Sizemore and Complainant Anderson reached the outside about 7:4
James Bowman, who was waiting for them, directed questions to Compla
because he knew Complainant and did not know Sizemore. He asked Com
how many men were underground. When Complainant replied, "seven or
Bowman asked whether he was aware that there had not been a preshift
tion of the mine in the hours from 8:00 to 4:00. Complainant said h
that, but company policy, and federal regulations to his knowledge,
preshift examinations only once every 24 hours on weekends. Inspect
then said, "Your mine is now under a 104(d)(2) order, which is under
an unwarrantable failure closure order."

At the hearing, Inspector Bowman explained that he questioned t
foremen as to their knowledge of the lack of a preshift examination
to determine what kind of order should be issued. Complainant's adm
an important factor in Bowman's decision to issue an unwarrantable f
order.

14. Complainant called Bobby McBride, dispatcher, and instruct
call the men underground out of the mine. Mickey Sizemore called R
Lamastus to inform him that James Bowman had issued a 104(d)(2) clos
order.

At about 9:30 p.m., David Bailey, superintendent, arrived at the mine and talked to Mickey Sizemore concerning the fireboss book.

The following day, Monday, July 30, 1979, David Bailey called Complainant to his office and gave Complainant a choice of resigning or being discharged. Complainant asked, "Why?", and David Bailey pointed to the closure order. Complainant said it was not his nature to quit. Complainant was discharged on that date.

DISCUSSION WITH FURTHER FINDINGS

The MSHA inspector issued the order of withdrawal on Sunday, July 29, 1979, after examining the preshift books and discovering the mine had been last preshifted more than 8 hours before the evening shift, in violation of 30 C.F.R. § 75.303. 1/ The Complainant and another foreman working the shift had been called to the surface to speak with the inspector before the order was issued. The inspector asked the Complainant if he knew the mine had not been preshifted within 8 hours. The Complainant stated that he knew that, but that company policy, and federal regulations, to his knowledge, required preshift examinations only once every 24 hours during weekends. Thereupon, the inspector showed Complainant the text of the regulation and issued an order. That order, not the subject of this proceeding, reads in part:

A preshift examination was not made within 8 hours immediately preceding the entrance of miners scheduled to work in active workings. The section foremen in charge of the mine stated that they knew the mine had not been preshift examined on the preceding shift. Four other men worked over-time from the preceding shift making a total of 11 miners underground on the 4:00 p.m. shift, and a preshift was not made.

Mine management subsequently discharged the Complainant for knowingly violating a federal mine safety law, whereupon Complainant filed this act

1/ Section 75.303 provides, in part:

"(a) Within 3 hours immediately preceding the beginning of any shift and before any miner in such shift enters the active workings of a coal mine, certified persons designated by the operator of the mine shall examine such workings and any other underground area of the mine designated by the Secretary or his authorized representative * * *. Each such mine examiner shall also record the results of his examination with ink or indelible pencil in a book approved by the Secretary * * *.

in fact was a good faith belief by Complainant and was simply his co-
orders from his immediate supervisor, who received no discipline. The
company management discharged Complainant knowing this situation, that
was arbitrary and discriminatory. If they discharged him without knowing
situation, they were arbitrary, discriminatory, and grossly negligent
failing to interview Lamastus and check with other personnel, and examine
preshift books, to investigate Complainant's side of the story, which
have been borne out by any reasonable investigation into the facts.

Management's arbitrary treatment of Complainant establishes, by
derance of the evidence, that the effective motivation for his discharge
Complainant's admission to the inspector in which he stated that he
mine had not been preshifted within 8 hours. It was this admission
contributed to the federal inspector's issuance of a closure order.

Section 105(c)(1) of the Act 2/ protects miners against discrimination
for filing or making a safety complaint under the Act, for instituting
proceeding under or related to the Act, and for other protected activities.
The drafters of section 105(c)(1) stated that "(t)he listing of protected
rights contained in section (105)(c)(1) is intended to be illustrative
and not exclusive (and should) be construed expansively to assure that
will not be inhibited in any way in exercising any rights afforded by
legislation." S. Rpt. No. 95-181, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. 36 (1977),
in Legislative History of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977
624 (1978). I find that Complainant's statements to the inspector were
protected activities under the Act. Complainant made his statements in
response to a question posed by a federal inspector. He responded truthfully
and to the best of his knowledge. As such, he was participating in a
investigation of mine safety with a federal inspector, actions which
under the protection of the Act. Cf. Pace v. Consolidation Coal Company,
3 FMSHRC 176 (January 13, 1981). I therefore find that the Complainant
engaged in activities protected by section 105(c).

2/ Quoted on p. 7

if they knew they could be discharged for their statements. investigative functions would be severely impaired and the process would be thwarted.

Complainant engaged in protected activities and those activities were an effective or substantial motive for his discharge. His discharge was therefore discriminatory, in violation of section 105(c) of the Act.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission has jurisdiction over the parties and this proceeding.

2. Respondent violated section 105(c)(1) of the Act by discharging Complainant, as found above.

3. Complainant is entitled to reinstatement, back pay with interest, attorney's fee, and other reasonable costs of prosecution of this complaint herein, and other relief to be specified in a final order.

PENDING A FINAL ORDER

Pending a final order, counsel for the parties are directed to make an effort to stipulate the amount of back pay, interest, attorney's fees and costs due Complainant under this decision, and to stipulate to the terms of a proposed final order.

If counsel are unable to stipulate as to any particular issue, Complainant should file a proposed final order and Respondent is granted leave to reply to it and, if necessary and appropriate, an evidentiary hearing will be held on issues of material fact. The relief to be accorded to the Complainant.

Accordingly, counsel for Complainant should file herein, within 30 days from receipt of this decision, either (1) a joint proposed final order or (2) his own proposed final order with an explanation of the facts existing between the parties as to such order.


WILLIAM FAUVER, JR.

F. Alfred Sines, Jr., Esq., Anderson & Sines, Drawer 1459, Beck
WV 25801

Jerry F. Palmer, Esq., Itmann Coal Company, 1800 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15241

2/ Section 105(c)(1) of the Act provides:

(c) (1) No person shall discharge or in any manner discriminate against or cause to be discharged or cause discrimination against or otherwise interfere with the exercise of the statutory rights of any miner, representative of miners or applicant for employment in any coal or other mine subject to this Act because such miner, representative of miners or applicant for employment has filed or made a complaint under or related to this Act, including a complaint notifying the operator or the operator's agent, or the representative of the miners at the coal or other mine of an alleged danger or safety or health violation in a coal or other mine, or because such miner, representative of miners or applicant for employment is the subject of medical evaluations and potential transfer under a standard published pursuant to section 101 or because such miner, representative of miners or applicant for employment has instituted or caused to be instituted any proceeding under or related to this Act or has testified or is about to testify in any such proceeding, or because of the exercise by such miner, representative of miners or applicant for employment on behalf of himself or others of any statutory right afforded by this Act.

SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	Complaint of D
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	Discrimination
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	
on behalf of JOSEPH PASTINE	:	Docket No: WEV.
Applicant	:	MORG CD 81-16
	:	
v.	:	Susan No. 1 Mi
	:	
FAIRFAX TRUCKING COMPANY,	:	
Respondent	:	

ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO WITHDRAW

MSHA, with the consent of Mr. Pastine, has moved complaint of discrimination that it filed on Mr. Pastine. The reason for filing the motion is that subsequent investigation that there was no violation.

MSHA has stated that its position is that Mr. Pastine is able to file his own complaint under Section 105(c)(3) 30 days after the case is dismissed if he chooses to do so; however, does not address the situation where the government's action on a miner's behalf and later changes its mind on the dismissal of the case. The government's proposition is, however, and if Mr. Pastine should choose to file an appeal on his behalf he would certainly have an arguable position. It is the effect that any ruling that I might make in the instant case will have on a case he might file in the future.

The Motion to withdraw is granted and the case is dismissed.

Charles C. Moore, Jr.
Charles C. Moore, Jr.
Administrative Law

Distribution: By Certified Mail

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Harry A. Smith, III, Esq., Counsel for Fairfax Trucking Co., P.O.B. 1905, Elkins, WV 25241

James G. Polino, President, Fairfax Trucking Co., Elkins, WV 26241

MAY 28

SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	CIVIL PENALTY PROCEEDING
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA),	:	Docket No. PENN 82-29
Petitioner	:	A.C. No. 36--00970-033
v.	:	
	:	Maple Creek No. 1 Mine
U.S. STEEL MINING COMPANY, INC.,	:	
Respondent	:	

DECISION AND ORDER OF DISMISSAL

Appearances: David Bush, Esq., Office of the Solicitor
U.S. Department of Labor, Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania, for Petitioner;
Louise O. Symons, Esq., Pittsburgh, Penn-
sylvania, for Respondent.

Before: Judge McEllick

This case is before me upon a petition for assessment of civil penalty under section 110(a) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et seq., the "Act", in which the Secretary has proposed a penalty for alleged violation on September 17, 1981, of a mandatory safety standard. The Secretary's petition was filed on January 6, 1982, and was answered by the U.S. Steel Mining Company, Inc., (U.S. Steel) on January 18, 1982. Notice was issued on February 24, 1982, scheduling hearings to commence on May 3, 1982. An amended notice was issued on April 6, 1982, rescheduling the hearings for May 4, 1982.

The Secretary's case-in-chief was purportedly to be presented at hearing through the testimony of an MSHA inspector. The inspector proceeded to testify, however, about a citation unrelated to the case at bar (Citation No. 114 issued March 31, 1982). After discovering his error, the inspector conceded that he was unable to recall the facts relating to the citation at issue in this case. Counsel for the Secretary explained that the two citations charged violations of the same standard and the factual allegations in each were similar. He further proffered that, inexplicably, the citations became mixed up during prehearing preparations.

Under the circumstances, I granted a recess to permit the inspector to contact his office to locate his notes for

tion about which the inspector was prepared to testify, not even been issued at the time the hearing was held and had been issued only shortly before the actual hearing. (3) that once his error was known, the Secretary's lack of good faith in failing to conduct a search of the inspector's notes (to refresh the inspector's recollection of the citation at issue) during a continuance granted specifically for that purpose, (4) that significant expenditures in time and money had been incurred as a result of the scheduled hearing and that additional such expenditures would be incurred by any further continuance of the proceedings, (5) that there were no assurances that, in the event of a further continuance, the Secretary would be any more prepared to present his case, and (6) that the case was prepared for hearing with two staff attorneys and witnesses present.

The bench decision denying the Secretary's request for an additional continuance and dismissing the case on the basis of the evidence is affirmed at this time. Accordingly, No. 1050294 is VACATED and this case is DISMISSED.


Gary Melick
Assistant Chief Administrative Law Judge

Distribution: By certified mail.

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